

SPRING 2024 VOL. 26 NO. 3

The Register

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



Appraising the Performance of Administrators

Rights, protection and political management

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The Equity Leadership Journey

Participants will

- engage in self-reflection and better understand unconscious bias
- explore the significance of our own learning stance and
- gain deeper insights on facilitating courageous conversations.



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Respect for School Leaders

Working to restore understanding and appreciation



This school year, the overwhelming majority of our meetings, advocacy and work has revolved around three main issues: staff shortages, contract negotiations and the fair treatment of principals and vice-principals. The second and third items are deeply connected.

Anecdotal accounts and data from around the world indicate that the mistreatment of school leaders is on the rise. During the pandemic, principals and vice-principals were the (masked) faces who had to defend often unpopular safety measures and access issues to in-person and online learning. There were many conflicts that became very concerning, even violent. School leaders did their best to manage. Fulfilling their responsibilities often meant setting aside their personal fears, putting on a brave face and expecting the unexpected. The masks often hid the stressed, overworked, undervalued and exhausted visages of those who were required to navi-

gate the directives from governments and public health units.

During the pandemic, the government's media updates often included accolades – appropriately and fairly – for first responders, healthcare practitioners, supermarket cashiers and a few other employee groups. Unfortunately, that praise was absent for principals and vice-principals, despite our efforts to keep schools open, ensure student and staff safety, and accommodate our students with special needs. New initiatives continued to roll out and were added to the principal/vice-principal's list of duties, even as our associations raised concerns about the impacts of work intensification.

While school boards and the government made statements about the importance of looking after one's well-being, their corresponding actions did not match those statements. Far from mitigating our stressors, these statements came to be viewed by school leaders as well-meaning but empty.

Despite our hard work and dedication, the public is often misinformed about our work. They really don't know what happens behind the scenes. Stereotypes from pop culture often portray principals and vice-principals in a negative light. The diminishing return on respectability for the role of school leader, amplified by both seeming indifference and misunderstandings of our work, can have negative impacts in schools. We hear stories of school leaders being harassed and threatened by parents, both in person and on social media. In the wake of a disregard for the challenges we face – where our professional reputations are frequently impugned and/or undermined – negative assessments in the public mind persist, both inaccurately and unfairly.

As school leaders, we can find ourselves navigating a changing educational landscape where demands continuously outweigh resources, sometimes enduring behaviour that belies standards of respect and decency. The effects of this undermining of the role impacts both current and potential leaders in schools and districts, directly impacting their wellness and effectiveness. Increasingly, classroom teachers are rightfully reluctant to take

on formal leadership roles and the attendant stressors, conflicts and portrayals they see in the public realm.

This crossroads where we now find ourselves in educational leadership did not happen overnight, nor did it happen by accident. What began with indifference must be replaced with intentionality.

So, what can we do? For the past two years, the OPC has been running an advocacy campaign called the [Principal Profile](#), meant to educate the public about who we are and what we do. We take opportunities during meetings to discuss these issues with ministry officials. We encourage the provincial government to refrain from offensive and confrontational rhetoric directed at educators, including school leaders. We urge school boards to assert their support for, and the value they place on, strong, inclusive and effective school leaders. And we continue to raise these issues at the bargaining table. Our efforts to advocate on your behalf will continue to be a critical part of our work.

Let's get back to the basics (indeed), but let's start with basic human decency. ▲



Ralph Nigro

✉ president@principals.ca



Ontario Principals' Council
20 Queen Street West, 27th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5H 3R3
Tel: 416-322-6600 or 1-800-701-2362
Fax: 416-322-6618
www.principals.ca
Email: admin@principals.ca

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Daisi Dina, assistant editor
Ruth Hanley, proofreader
Nadine Trépanier-Bisson, business manager

Art Direction and Design:
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Advertising:
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905-886-6640

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 ...



On February 28, we held our annual Principal's Day at Queen's Park. Our Provincial Executive met with 32 MPPs including Minister Lecce; the Leader of the Official Opposition, Marit Stiles; the Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, Bonnie Crombie and the Leader of the Green Party, Mike Schreiner.



On April 6, school leaders gathered in Ottawa for the Eastern Cooperative OPC Conference. Participants engaged in networking and learning, together with OPC staff.



Principals and vice-principals from Rainy River, Lakehead and Superior-Greenstone came together on April 13 to collaborate, share and learn together for the 2nd annual Northern Collective. OPC staff shared resources, experiences and knowledge within a Northern context.



Summer Opportunities

Supports for both new and experienced leaders

We continue to build our understanding and capacity to develop and review learning opportunities with a critical human rights and equity lens. Surveys, conversations and other communication channels give us much-appreciated feedback on strengths and areas for improvement, and we continually strive to revise and adapt programming to be current, relevant and responsive to Member diversity and needs. This commitment is reaffirmed in our revised [Professional Learning \(PL\) Guiding Principles](#).

One of our ongoing challenges is transition and mentorship support for new principals and vice-principals. Transition supports are essential to enhance professional capacity and growth, and contribute to the overall well-being and success of the school community. Stepping into these leadership roles requires a deep understanding of education-based legislation and policies, along with interpersonal skills and high emotional intelligence, to effectively navigate the complexities of school operations.

Beginning in August 2024, specific opportunities have been designed to support those transitioning to new leadership positions.

[Navigating Leadership Transitions](#)

– Free Online Sessions

- Your First Month with the OPC (for new vice-principals) – August 19
- Navigating the Transition from Vice-principal to Principalship (for new principals) – August 22
- Setting Up a Documentation System – August 27
- Making Time for Building Relationships – August 29

[New Administrator Support](#)

[Program \(NASP\) – Eight](#)

[Sessions Throughout the Year](#)

These online sessions have been designed to cover key topics that are essential to new leaders as they build their knowledge, skills and confidence in their roles. Join in collaborative learning on

- culturally responsive leadership
- conducting investigations and bias-aware progressive discipline

- finance and managing resources, and
- working with unions and managing staff relationships.

[Leadership Coaching](#)

This is a personalized development process aimed at enhancing skills and effectiveness. Our expert coaches specialize in empowering education leaders to navigate complex challenges, inspire their teams and drive meaningful change within their schools. Participants will develop their strengths, identify opportunities for growth and set specific goals to enhance their repertoire of effective leadership strategies and confidence. It is a unique opportunity for both new and experienced leaders to elevate their growth journey on a path toward a transformative impact on school communities.

Check with your local OPC representative, as coaching sessions may be eligible for the use of professional development funds. Learn more about these and other relevant learning opportunities by visiting our [PL web page](#). ▲

✉ learning@principals.ca



Appraising the Performance of Administrators

The ins and outs of rights, protection and political management

By the Protective Services Team

Illustration by Sophie Casson

*Note: Much of the information in this article was previously published in an article in 2003. This has been updated to reflect current expectations.

Supportive, growth-oriented organizations conduct performance appraisals to further develop staff and improve the organization. As school and system leaders, principals and vice-principals (P/VPs) participate in performance appraisals as both appraisers and appraisees. In Ontario, the process for the appraisal of P/VPs is outlined in the *Education Act, Regulation 234/10*. It is expected that a supervisory officer will appraise principals and that a principal will appraise vice-principals. These relationships can enhance the supportive nature of the appraisal experience.

As the lead learners in a school or system role, P/VPs recognize that the work they do impacts the entire system. It is system and school goals that influence the individual goal setting of school leaders. With these goals as the catalyst for identifying personal professional development, one must recognize that the Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA) is not an isolated event. It is part of the continuum of leadership development. As such, P/VPs will identify “one or more goals focused on improving student achievement and well-being which shall uphold the principles of equity and human rights” considering the School Improvement Plan, Board Improvement Plan and provincial priorities (*Education Act, Regulation 234/10*). The P/VP should identify a personal goal that incrementally develops their leadership and impacts their overall effectiveness in relation to specific needs in the school or department where they lead.

Performance Appraisal: Rights and protections

A performance appraisal is a tool that informs administrators about how well they have met the appraisal expectations and provides them with areas for growth. It assists administrators in the development of a strong and effective skill set, no matter their current level of per-

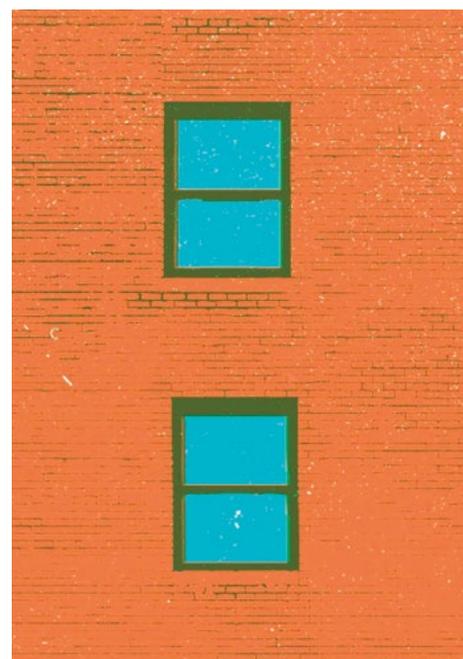
The Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA) is not an isolated event. It is part of the continuum of leadership development.

formance. What follows is a description of the elements of a fair and transparent appraisal process that protects the employment rights of the administrator.

Publication of the Process

Shared information is the hallmark of a transparent process. Regulation 234/10 sets out timelines for the cycle of evaluation as well as the [evaluation process](#) itself. Information about notification, development of performance plan, expected meetings and the mandatory summative report form is all outlined in the Regulation. While some boards may have adapted their guidelines, the purpose and process must remain congruent with the expectations outlined in the Regulation.

Advice: Make sure that you understand



able personal characteristic), contact the OPC PST for advice. The PST may assist you in lodging a complaint to the board's human rights complaint process and/or complain to the Human Rights Commission.

Forms, Reports and Meetings

The purpose of forms, reports and meetings is outlined in the Regulation. Since a performance appraisal is governed by privacy laws, you have the right to know where information is to be filed, who has access to it and what retention process will be followed for the notes and reports. This is particularly important if you receive an unsatisfactory rating. For example, if you plan on changing boards, copies of an appraisal report are retained for six years and can be requested by the board that is contemplating offering you employment.

The purpose of each of the four meetings in the performance appraisal process is outlined in the Regulation. The initial meeting between the appraiser and the appraisee should focus on developing the performance plan. The second meeting is intended to review the progress of the goals set out in the performance plan. The third meeting provides an opportunity to review the results of the work done by the appraisee in accomplishing the goals set out. The focus should be on the demonstrated leadership taken by the administrator toward achieving the goals. Failure to achieve a goal is not necessarily an indication of an unsatisfactory appraisal.

The provincial summative report form is the mandatory one to be used during an appraisal even if the board has modified the process. The summative report must be provided to you within 15 days of

the third meeting in the evaluation process. A fourth meeting is held to discuss the summative report. Whether your performance is satisfactory or unsatisfactory, the appraiser needs to commit an opinion to paper and share this opinion with you. If you have concerns regarding the accuracy of comments made in the summative report, identify your concerns for discussion at the fourth meeting. Note that the fourth meeting must take place within 10 days of your receipt of the report. Review the report without delay.

The signing of a performance appraisal summative report indicates receipt, not agreement with the comments it contains. The report allows you to add your comments if you wish.

Advice: Maintain your own notes in each of the prescribed meetings. Seek concrete feedback in each meeting, such as the appropriateness of goals, availability of support and flexibility in outcomes.

If you receive a report with an unsatisfactory rating, call the PST as soon as possible and prior to engaging in the fourth meeting.

Unsatisfactory Appraisal

An unsatisfactory performance appraisal can result in a transfer, demotion or eventual dismissal. It is imperative that once an administrator receives an unsatisfactory report, they be afforded support and assistance from the board as they progress through the next stage. An improvement plan must be developed in conjunction with the appraiser. Time-bound ex-

the process that your board has in place. If your board has adapted a process that differs from the Regulation, understand how it differs and what is expected of you. For example, the Regulation specifies one or more goals are to be set as the focus of the appraisal. Boards may specify a reasonable number of goals.

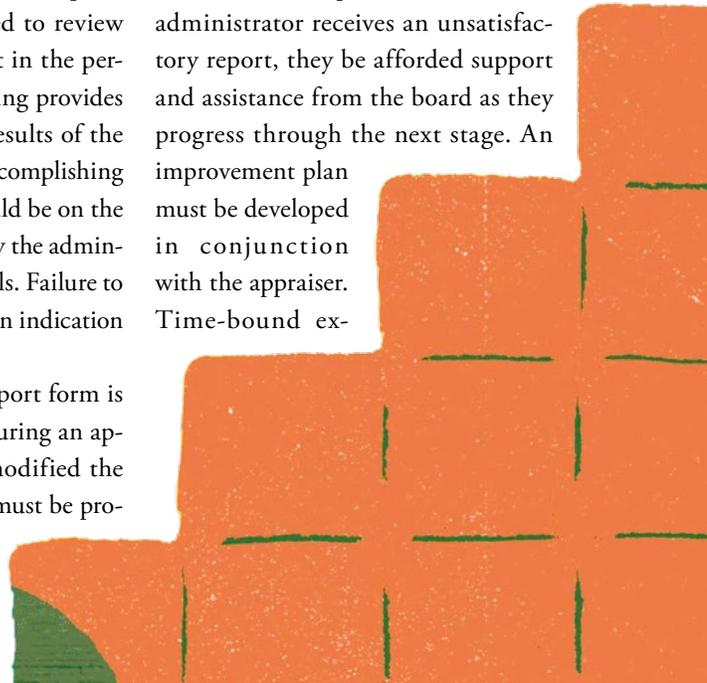
If the process is not consistent with the Regulation or you are being appraised and the published process is not being followed, call the OPC Protective Services Team (PST) at 1-800-701-2362 for guidance.

Language of Appraisal

The language used to describe performance must be clear, free of bias and conducive to improvement. It is not enough for the appraiser to state that a certain area of practice is unsatisfactory: they should also provide real examples of unsatisfactory performance and describe what satisfactory performance looks like.

It is a violation of human rights for an appraiser to refer to the subject's race, gender, ethnicity, age or any other protected area as a factor or topic for commentary when making judgments about work performance.

Advice: If you are the subject of a performance appraisal that is potentially in violation of your human rights (e.g., you are uncomfortable with the language used to describe your performance or feel that you are being discriminated against because of an inalien-



The appraiser should assess whether the expectations for skill development are being met and direct the appraisee's professional development accordingly.

Expectations of support must be clearly outlined. A plan is also put in place for a subsequent appraisal. Both the appraisee and the appraiser play a role for support to be provided, accessed and utilized. The appraisee must understand what skill development is needed and what opportunities will be provided to foster and show growth and development.

The board's focus should be on skills development. The appraiser should assess whether the expectations for skill development are being met and direct the appraisee's professional development accordingly. If the school or location you are at is not conducive to your skill development, you may wish to request a transfer to another site.

If the unsatisfactory appraisal is legitimate and your ability or desire to acquire the requisite skill is not manageable, you may have some tough choices to make. Perhaps some career counselling and/or personal counselling would be in order through the Employee Assistance Program.

The Principal/Vice-Principal Terms and Conditions agreement will often outline the rights of the administrator when a board is contemplating transfer, demotion or dismissal. Nonetheless, the Regulation outlines

a clear process to support skill development in P/VPs who are not operating at an acceptable level of competence in their role. The goal of the appraisal is to improve your performance.

Advice: Competency issues do not necessarily translate into "just cause," so it is imperative to get advice from the PST as soon as you have any indication that the appraisal result will be unsatisfactory. The sooner you call, the greater the ability of a PST consultant to intervene on your behalf and ensure that the board is doing its part to help improve your leadership skills. The PST will also make you aware of your options. Do not resign from your position without first speaking to the PST.

Performance Appraisal: Political Management

Regulation 234/10 provides detailed expectations for the appraisal process. This transparency supports both the appraiser and the appraisee and protects them from personal agendas, biases and personality clashes. Ensure that you know and understand the process by which you will be appraised. Keep in mind that although boards may adapt their own process, it must be congruent with the Regulation. For example, a board may mandate the number of goals that must be set as the focus of the appraisal, but it cannot alter the timelines for meetings and distribution of forms and reports. Ensure that you know and understand the process at the outset.

A supervisor should provide you with indications of your performance prior to the appraisal process. The feedback from your supervisor should be acknowledged and acted upon. If you do so, the appraisal process should unfold much more efficiently. It is to be hoped that you will not be surprised by the contents of the report. However, if the report contains statements of fact or conclusions with which you disagree, contact the PST.



Disputing the contents of the report must be done dispassionately, so it is better to wait until you have had time to reflect, consult and consider your response.

Many factors and outcomes govern the nature of the appraisal process and response, not the least of which is the preservation of working relationships. The role of the appraiser is to be honest and precise in their appraisal of your performance; your role is to listen to the feedback, internalize the information, enhance your performance and learn as much as possible from the process.

The Principal Appraiser

The relationship between the principal and vice-principal is that of co-leader and mentor. The principal bears some responsibility for the performance of a vice-principal inasmuch as recognizing and supporting areas of growth. The principal can provide regular guidance, but the follow-through is the responsibility of the vice-principal. The PPA process for the vice-principal becomes an opportunity to demonstrate the autonomy of the VP in taking charge of their learning and demonstrating their effectiveness.

Since P/VPs interact daily, the PPA process essentially becomes integrated in the routine of the school year. The requirements of the PPA process must be fulfilled in accordance with the Regulation. At the same time, informal opportunities to provide support through the development of skills and achievement of goals typically exist in abundance. Principals must be cautious in separating themselves from the goal(s) set by the vice-principal. Both need to safeguard the responsibility of the vice-principal to achieve their goal(s) with a level of autonomy.

Principals must also safeguard the formal process of the PPA and ensure that time is set aside for each of the required meetings. Documentation should be completed with care and

attention to detail so that the development and impact of the skills, or lack thereof, of the vice-principal are clearly identified.

Advice: When there are concerns that a performance appraisal rating may be unsatisfactory, the principal must ensure that they have concisely documented the feedback and support that they have provided. As soon as there is a concern about a lack of skill development, consultation with a supervisory officer is also recommended. Principals can also reach out to the PST to discuss additional support that may be offered to the vice-principal to develop their skills. Confidentiality is maintained at the OPC when addressing concerns between P/VP partners.

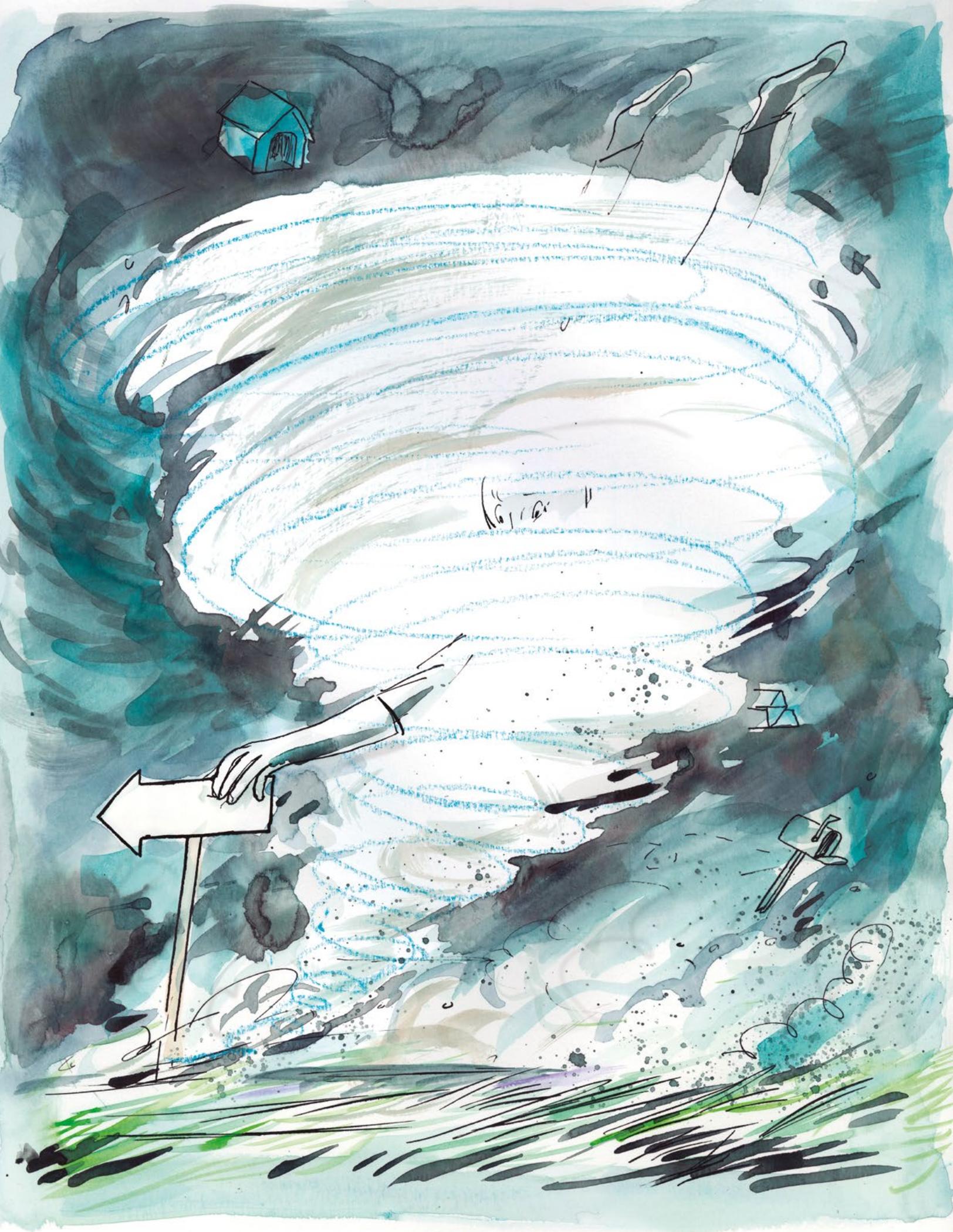
Conclusion

The performance appraisal should be viewed as a growth experience for administrators and a quality assurance mechanism for the employer and the public. When conducted in a fair, predictable and supportive manner, a performance appraisal should result in improved leadership.

Principals and vice-principals are reminded that many opportunities are available, beyond the board, to support your professional development. The OPC's [Professional Learning](#) department offers a variety of workshops, webinars, book clubs and other opportunities that will support your professional needs at any time during your career. You are encouraged to review offerings and archives to support your learning. ▲

✉ asayed@principals.ca





By Michelle Sigmann
Illustration by Graham Roumieu

Taking Back Control →

Help improve your mental health and well-being

Wellness is a spectrum, and when we can learn to take back control of our emotions and daily decisions, we are beginning the process of being proactive with our mental health and well-being.

What is it that we truly need? How can we navigate through this?

The strategies outlined in this article may help you determine the answers. If you are struggling with situations at work, or even just struggling with changing habits, you may want to try and implement some of the strategies suggested here. I am a principal and a Certified Wellness Coach who has executed all of the strategies I describe below. But before I did all that work, as an administrator I hit rock bottom due to stressors in my external environment. Those stressors changed the way I showed up at work and at home. I became someone I didn't know. So, I learned how to retrain my brain to take back control.

In our work as administrators, there are times when we have to make quick decisions, often having to do with student safety. The control is "What are we doing at this moment to bring this situation back to safety?" However, in most cases, the situations we deal with are not urgent, giving us the time to think them through and take back control (i.e., listening, reflecting and asking critical questions). Having control doesn't mean doing it "our way." It means taking back control to have a clearer mindset, to stay consistent with how we want to show up and lead.

As stated above, wellness is a spectrum, and we all fit on that spectrum in one way or another. However, some of us choose to find our own pathway, and not all things are one-size-fits-all.

As a principal and Wellness Coach, one of the biggest challenges I see in education today – and have experienced myself – is the need to navigate and work through situations that are overwhelming, stressful, and cause anxiety and other stressors in our bodies. We are faced

with moments of uncertainty, and things that are completely out of our control. It is necessary for us to work through and accept these. But how can we do that without allowing it to take over how we show up in our work and in our personal lives outside of work? Or is it even possible to do?

Speaking from my own experience working through many challenges in my own workplace and personal life, I believe it is possible. Stressors are in our everyday lives, and we can use stress to help and motivate us, or we can use it to bog us down and isolate us.

There are a series of steps you could consider to help you work through daily stressors. When you learn how to make this a regular practice, it can help you to work through difficult moments without allowing them to derail the way you show up.

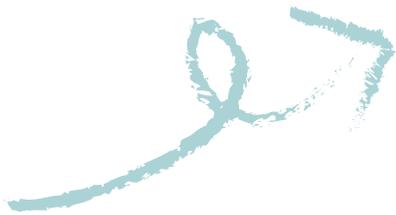
First, acknowledge that you are working through a difficult moment or incident. Identifying and acknowledging the issue can help you work through the parts that are fully in your control.

Second, identify what is out of your control and write that down (split your page into two sections: "in my control," and "out of my control").



Stressors are in our everyday lives, and we can use stress to help and motivate us, or we can use it to bog us down and isolate us.





Writing it down makes things more real and we absorb them better (i.e., recognize they are there). Once written, you may realize that you can take control of more than you think, allowing you to see the issue more clearly and with a critical eye.

Third, identify what in that moment you are in control of; write it down, identify it and focus completely on it. When we can separate “out of my control” and “in my control,” our minds become clearer and we can focus on the thing that we can actually have an impact on.

The challenge is that, as administrators, we often don’t take the time to work through a process like this because our work can be very reactive at times. When we slow down our decision-making, we take back control and gain confidence.

Another challenge is the outside stressors and environment that can consume our ability to take the time needed to work through this process. I say, “Make the time!” As school leaders, we are modelling staying within our control to make the best decisions for our students, staff and school community. This

is also how we grow. That’s not to say that we won’t have bad days. It is just more of a question: Which mindset would you rather take on the majority of the time?

A quote by author and life coach David Kasneci sums it up well. “The repetition of the micro habits you exhibit daily, the thoughts you think, where you channel your energy, and the environments you’re in, lay the foundation of your current state of consciousness.”

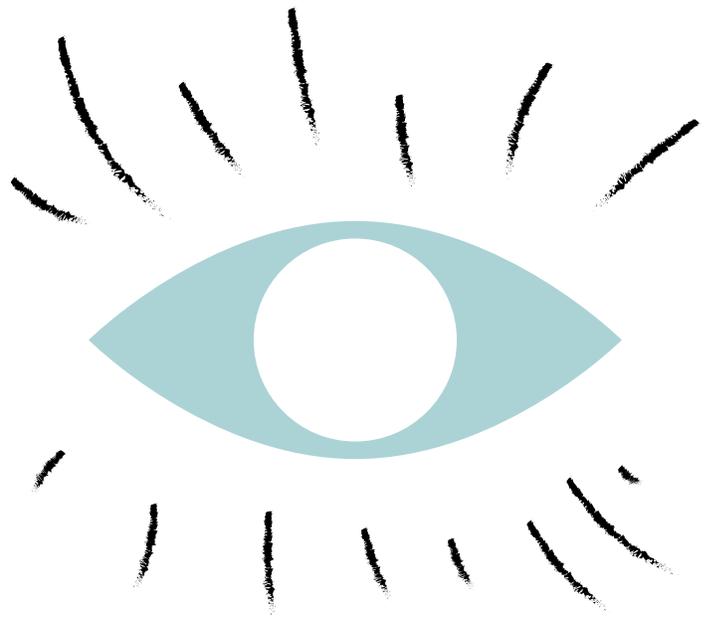
Another factor is reasoning. Your mind works like a filter system; anything you tell it, it believes. If you have ever researched the mind specific to the reticular activating system (RAS), you will understand that our brains have this incredible part called the RAS that helps us filter information. The downside is that we are the ones who train our RAS.

We live in a world of “quick fixes,” and if we fall into this notion, it will be difficult to feel in control, leading to an increase in stressors and more fear in our decisions as leaders. If we want to avoid the trap of searching for the “quick fix,” we need to reprogram our RAS to make it believe what we want it to believe.

When I began consciously working to slow down my decisions and bring focus and attention to what was in my control, I found my workplace became a more positive space. So I began doing it outside my work as well. When we practise a strategy in our workplace enough, it will transfer to our home life, and vice versa.

Our lives are mini habits combined into multiple decisions that result in outcomes. We determine those outcomes by how we make decisions and the habits we decide to commit to. That doesn’t mean every day will be positive and calm. But the more we practise the exercise of identifying what is and is not in our control, the more our brains learn to dissect and filter information coming in, and the better we can respond to that information.

To go back to our RAS, how do you train this part of your brain? Write yourself a power statement every morning. Keep this statement



with you and read it several times a day. Power statements – also known as affirmations and/or mantras – are statements that help train your RAS. The statement is yours; it is written in the present form and is about something you want to do but are currently not doing. This might seem unnatural at first, or might feel like imposter syndrome because you are telling yourself you are a certain way when you might not currently be. But this is how you retrain your RAS. The statement starts with “I am,” or “Today I am currently,” not “I wish” or “I think I can.”

Remember, your brain only believes what you tell it to believe; therefore you are telling it you are already a certain way or are choosing to lead or make decisions a certain way.

Visualization is another strategy to train your brain to believe something is true. It is the practice of creating an image or a video in your mind of what you want to believe is true, and continuing to play it over and over. Your brain creates thoughts, your thoughts form emotions, and those emotions turn into decisions and beliefs. The thoughts and emotions create a decision and your decisions form an outcome. The outcome is what creates your future pathway.

If you choose to try these strategies, make sure to practise them in a calm manner. Your brain cannot operate as well under stress, as tension blocks the flow of thought power. When we think a certain way all the time, those outcomes will never change. We need to change our thought process to change our decisions. We need to change our decisions to create better habits. Believe that every problem has a solution.

The work we do is difficult and stressful, and at times may make us feel lonely. To do our work authentically and in a mentally healthy way, we need to be confident with our thoughts and the way we make decisions. Don't doubt your ability to take control and stay in control of your decisions. You can't control everything in your day or the actions of others, but you can control the way you react and make decisions.



We need to change our thought process to change our decisions. We need to change our decisions to create better habits.



When you change your perspective, and begin to take more control over your stress, you will be amazed by how you show up as a leader.

In the book *Hidden Potential* by Adam Grant, there is a quote by a chess coach that says, “You can’t control your results, you can only control your decisions.” This quote resonated with me because it is everything that defines why our brains are so powerful. When we think about our workplace and the challenges we face daily, we may realize that we often go into work with expectations and intentions for ourselves, and so many days these expectations get derailed because something happened that we could not predict. This is the nature of the work we do in schools, and unfortunately the work we do is becoming more difficult every day. Therefore, imagine we could control the way we make decisions instead of only focusing on our intentions and expectations. When we do this, we control micro habits, we control our thoughts and emotions and, in the end, this will help us to stay more in control of our day. I am not saying we shouldn’t have expectations or set an intention in the morning – this is a great practice to have. I am saying we need to do more than just have an intention to change how we feel at the end of a busy day.

Every decision that is made in a day comes from our unconscious “what we do without even thinking.” These are our habits, things we have done forever, the way we have always reacted to things. The challenge we face as administrators is that in order to take back more control over our thoughts, our decision-making and the way

we react to our daily stressors, we need to retrain our brains in how we make decisions and take back control.

Taking back control is not a form of selfishness; it is a form of well-being. When we are in control of ourselves, it allows us to control the environments we put ourselves in, the thoughts and emotions we create and the way we train our inner world, in order to see new perspectives in the outer world. ▲

Michelle Sigmann is principal of Ormiston Public School in the Durham District School Board.

✉ michelle.sigmann@ddsb.ca

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ONE-T

Get to know your benefits plan

By Peggy Sweeney

In 2017, as part of the provincial agreement for principals and vice-principals (P/VPs), an Employee Life and Health Trust was established as a provincial benefits plan. The plan was named the [Ontario Non-union Education Trust](#), or ONE-T. Teachers and support staff developed their own plans, but P/VPs and other non-union employees were required to set up our own. The Trust provides coverage for life, health and dental coverage. This article aims to help you understand and learn about the plan that delivers your benefits.

Governance

The Trust is governed by Trustees appointed by the three provincial P/VP associations, other non-union groups, the Crown and the School Board Trustee Associations. The board is made up of nine Trustees – five from the employee groups (including two chosen by the P/VP associations) and four from the employers. The Chair is appointed by the employee groups.

Financing

In 2017, the provincial government provided start-up costs to get the Trust started. The P/VP associations also negotiated a per person amount

of funding for each P/VP in the province. That funding is used to pay for the benefit costs for P/VPs and their eligible family members. In each subsequent round of provincial bargaining, funding for ONE-T is one of the items we must negotiate with the Crown, as it provides the funding.

The plan must operate within the fiscal parameters of the funding provided by the government.

The sustainability of the plan is driven by two main factors – the cost of benefits, which continues to rise, and the use of the plan. Between our P/VPs and their family members, the usage of this plan has been very high. Financial sustainability of the plan is dependent on the care-





ful, appropriate and prudent use by all members, so that benefits are not reduced and/or premiums increased in the years ahead. The Trustees must also be prudent about the use of the plan. To manage costs, the Trust may make decisions about changes to the plan, such as the use of generic pharmaceuticals and biosimilar switching (see more details further in this article).

Because the plan is based on government funding, elements of it can change from time to time. It is reviewed annually, and changes are made as necessary to ensure its sustainability.

Although the three provincial P/VP associations are not Trust members, we maintain

an ongoing relationship with the Trust, communicating with the Trustees and meeting as necessary. We may be asked to provide a P/VP perspective, but the Trust remains an independent entity and the ONE-T Trustees make all final decisions regarding the management of all aspects of the Trust.

Paramedical Services

When the P/VP associations surveyed members before designing the new plan, one of the requests we received was for plan flexibility. Some people wanted coverage for massage therapy. Others preferred a dietician, a social

worker or a therapist. To provide the most flexibility, the plan covers \$1,300 worth of combined paramedical services per year. How you choose to spend that money, under this envelope, is up to you. It can be used for services provided by a chiroprapist, dietician, nutritionist, naturopath, podiatrist, chiropractor, osteopath, massage therapist and speech pathologist.

Physiotherapy

Since physiotherapy is medically required for many people after illnesses and injuries, the plan separates out those expenses. They are not included under paramedical services. In addition

to the other paramedical services, you also have access to \$1,300 per year in physiotherapy care. You will require a doctor's note when submitting this expense.

Mental Health and Well-being

The plan includes benefits to help you care for your mental health and emotional well-being. Per benefit year, \$1,300 is provided for combined eligible mental health services including psychologists, social workers, family therapists and psychotherapists.

Online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for anxiety, depression, pain and sleep issues is covered under psychologist services, provided it is referred and monitored by a psychologist. Because you can access CBT online from any device, at any time, these programs can make it easier to get help on your time and when you need it.

Health Care Spending Account

One of the big differences between our plan and that of teachers and support staff is the inclusion of a Health Care Spending Account (HCSA). Currently, the HCSA is \$450 per year and can be used to cover all eligible expenses as defined in the *Income Tax Act*, which includes many services and procedures from laser eye surgery to orthodontics to nutritional counselling. It can also pay the dif-

ference between what you pay for a service and what the plan covers. For example, if you have a \$130 physiotherapy expense, the plan will cover 90 per cent of the cost, and then you could claim the remainder through your HCSA. When submitting a claim, choose the box indicating that if the plan only covers part of the expense, you want your spending account to cover the rest.

The amount is per family (if you have family coverage), not per person covered under your plan. To qualify as an eligible expense, the service, procedure or supply claimed must be provided or prescribed by a medical practitioner who is licensed according to the laws in the province where they are practising. The funds allotted in the HCSA must be used in the current benefit year. Any unused credits remaining at the end of the period will not be carried forward.

Generic Drugs

The plan requires mandatory generic substitution. This means that if you choose to receive a brand name drug, you will be reimbursed only for the cost of the generic drug with the same medicinal ingredients. If there is a medical reason why you cannot use a generic substitution, then you can apply for an exemption.

Insurance

The plan provides two times your annual salary (up to \$500,000) for basic life insurance and two times your annual salary (up to \$500,000) for basic AD&D coverage for members. Members of the Trust are also able to purchase additional member life, spousal life, child life, member AD&D and spousal AD&D insurances if they choose. The additional costs will be paid directly by the member.

Dependents

The plan covers spouses and dependents.

A spouse is defined as

- a person to whom the participant is lawfully married
- a common-law spouse who has been living with the member in a conjugal relationship for at least 12 months or
- a former spouse for whom insured protection for some of the benefits available under the benefits plan is mandated by court order.

A dependent child is defined as an unmarried, natural, adopted or stepchild of the member – or of the insured spouse, if the spouse is living with the member and has custody of the child – who is

- no older than age 21 (or age 25, if the child is a full-time student) and
- not working more than 30 hours per week (unless the child is a full-time student).

Children who are incapable of supporting themselves due to physical or mental disorder are covered without age limit if the disorder begins before they turn age 21, or while they are students under age 25, and the disorder has been continuous since that time.

Emergency Travel Medical Coverage

If you're travelling out of the province or out of the country, you have emergency travel medical coverage under your ONE-T benefits plan. This benefit is for you and your eligible covered dependents. You're covered for up to 60 days per trip. If you have a health condition, check with Canada Life before you go. If you experience a medical emergency while you are away, it might not be eligible for coverage if it is the result of a condition that you know about or are actively treating before you go



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Supervising Principal, The Canadian Trillium College, Toronto Office:
• TEL: 416-763-4121 • FAX: 416-763-5225 • jobs@glctschool.com

away. Your benefits plan will only cover emergency medical treatments if the circumstance is unforeseen. The coverage does not cover trip cancellation, trip interruption or lost/damaged baggage, so insurance for these will need to be purchased separately.

Plan Updates

To continue meeting the needs of members, while also ensuring the long-term sustainability of the plan, ONE-T has introduced some new drug management initiatives.

Prior Authorization

There is now a prior authorization process for all new semaglutide drugs (e.g., Ozempic® and Wegovy®) via the FACET Drug Prior Authorization Program. This will help ensure that coverage is limited to those who are at the highest risk of negative health outcomes and who will most benefit from these drugs.

Biosimilar Switching

When the patent on a biologic drug (an “originator drug”) expires, other companies can produce

a biosimilar version, which is a highly similar drug in terms of quality, effectiveness and safety, but at a lower cost. The Ontario government has announced it will adopt biosimilar coverage for Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) recipients. ODB identified eight originator biologic drugs for biosimilar switching. ONE-T will align with the ODB biosimilar switching initiative. To start, the ONE-T plan will only provide coverage for the biosimilar version(s) of the first five originator drugs. ▲

✉ psweeney@principals.ca

ABOUT YOUR P/VP PLAN

- 8,404 active members
- 19,485 covered dependents
- \$58.4 million benefit costs at December 31, 2023
- Latest actuarial evaluation was December 31, 2023

HOW TO GET MORE INFORMATION

ONE-T

[ONE-T](#) oversees the overall plan for members. This includes setting policies, managing operations, overseeing funding and financials and oversight of ONE-T’s service partners. [Learn more about ONE-T’s role.](#)

Contact ONE-T

- for plan member inquiries
- to file an appeal

info@one-t.ca

Canada Life

[Canada Life](#) provides service for your health, dental and life insurance benefits, as well as your HCSA accounts. This includes all aspects of claims processing and answering your questions about using these plan benefits.

Contact Canada Life

- for information about health, dental, HCSA and life insurance benefits
- for expense eligibility or dental predeterminations
- to ask about claims processes or status
- for help logging into or using Canada Life’s

[GroupNet for Plan Member](#)

1-866-800-8086

Cowan

As the plan administrator, [Cowan](#) is responsible for collecting and maintaining member information, confirming eligibility and enrolling eligible members. Cowan creates your personal statements and tax slips, and answers questions about the plan rules.

Contact Cowan

- for questions about enrollment, eligibility (for you/dependents) and benefits costs
- to enroll in the plan or make changes after a life event
- to update personal information (name, address, etc.)
- to request an additional or replacement benefits card
- to request tax slips
- for help logging into or using Cowan’s

[Member Access](#) site

1-888-330-4010

one-t@cowangroup.ca

Cubic Health

[Cubic Health](#) runs the FACET program to provide prior authorization for coverage for specific specialty drugs, biologics or treatments for complex medical conditions. It provides an independent clinical review by a licensed pharmacist.

Contact Cubic Health

- for questions about drug claims that involve prior authorization (specialty drugs)
- for issues relating to the prior authorization process

1-844-492-9105

www.facetprogram.ca

Chubb

Chubb insures your AD&D benefits, including insurance options for you and your covered dependents. It provides the insurance coverage and processes any AD&D claims. All AD&D forms and information will be managed through Cowan. Members will not need to contact Chubb directly.

Additional Notes

- The benefit year starts September 1 and ends on August 31, except where otherwise indicated.
- Provincial coverage will be first payer where applicable.

We encourage you to become familiar with your plan, use it as needed and review the [ONE-T website](#) for any information or questions you may have.



By Payton Jacklin
Illustration by Doug Panton

Evolution or Revolution?

Confronting change in the age of AI

We are in the midst of what some are heralding as a new revolution, ushered in by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). Historically, revolutions have been bloody affairs in which established hierarchies and power dynamics were redrawn or magnified through rapid change. It is thus concerning that education is on the front lines of this newest potential revolution, and that there appears to be a natural inclination for various stakeholders to gravitate toward opposing sides.



Here is a situation that is playing out in our schools daily:

A student, who up to now has just been getting by in class, turns in work to their teacher. The teacher reads the submission and immediately recognizes that the language and ideas do not sound like the student's past work. For example, this student has never before used the word "henceforth" and has not previously demonstrated the ability to use commas effectively, and yet this submission uses both appropriately.

The teacher has a conversation with the student, during which the student vaguely communicates the basic ideas in the submission, but stares blankly at the teacher when asked about some of the more complex connections. The student insists that they completed the work themselves. Suspecting the student may not have done so, the teacher talks to their administrator about the possibility of plagiarism.

The administrator talks to the student, gets the same response the teacher received, and, faced with the student's doubling down on the authenticity of their work, calls the student's home. The student's parent insists that they watched their child complete the work.

What do you do with this information? It seems unlikely that questioning the truth of the parent's claims will be effective. The teacher will be unsatisfied accepting the submission. The administrator is caught in the middle. So, what do we need to solve this problem? Perhaps a time machine, because by this point, the damage is done. However, that does not mean nothing can be done to prevent this situation from arising in the first place.

Embracing the Opportunity

Many of us still hold on to the way in which we were taught or developed our practice, as the foundation for our models of teaching and learning. According to educator and author Eddie Obeng, "We spend our time responding rationally to a world which we understand and recognize, but which no longer exists" (Obeng 2012).

The world around us is changing. Change can be scary, it can be hard – but it can also bring opportunities for growth. The disruptions that AI tools are causing require us to reflect on and adapt our foundational practices.

Perhaps the most profound changes that AI tools push educators toward are in the area of assessment. When a tool, in 30 seconds, can produce an essay that is better than most of our students could do in a week's worth of classwork time, we need to reflect on what exactly we are asking students to do, and why they are doing it in the first place. This capability requires us to prioritize process and not product.

We need to consider assessments that use critical thinking, reflection and metacognition, returning to key expectations to assist with triangulation of data. We need to deprioritize the summative assessment as the only method through which students communicate their learning, focusing instead on the expectations the curriculum identifies. This is an opportunity to let students infuse their own identity and experiences into their work. It also allows us to ensure our assessments are accessible to our diverse student populations, making sure they are both academically responsive to our students' needs and





We might be afraid that exposing them to the realities of AI will only exacerbate the problem of its improper usage in the classroom, but that ship has sailed.

culturally responsive to their lived experiences. These changes are not new, but they have existed in the periphery because there was no existential need to adapt and accept them. AI is the evolutionary pressure requiring us to bring these into the fold.

Moving from AI Revolution to AI Evolution in our Schools

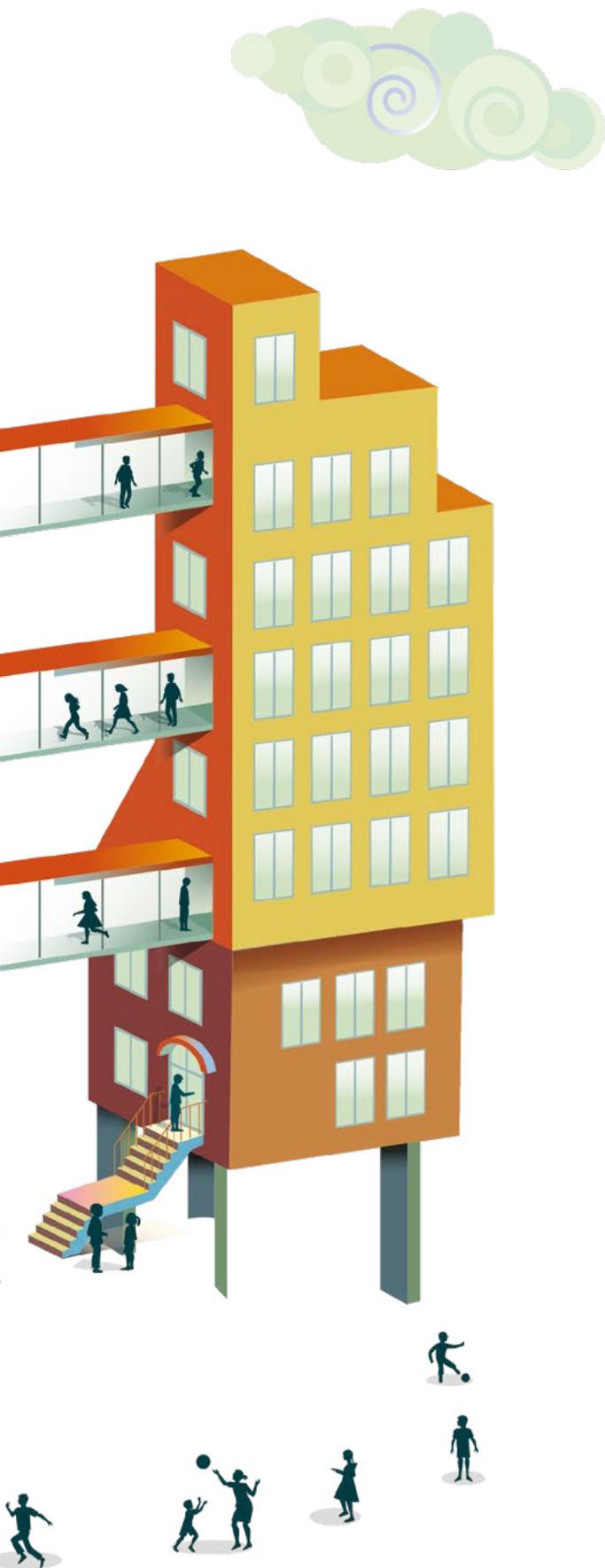
The problem with revolutions is not change, but the speed of change. In education, there are challenges that impact change at the speed that society is changing around us. Yet, our students are built for revolution. These changes are coming at the same time as students are figuring out the world, so it is much easier for them to construct their understanding of the world around these changes. We, on the other hand, are equipped not for revolution, but for evolution, adapting to changing conditions. This is because much of what we need to thrive is already in our educational DNA.

So what can be done to defuse the tensions in our schools created by the AI revolution; remove the battle lines; make meaningful, incremental change; and/or work toward our collective goal of student learning?

First, to go back to the scenario described at the beginning of this

article, we need to change our mindset from how we dealt with plagiarism in the past. We can no longer rely on a tool being the definitive source for telling us where the information in student work comes from. We can no longer rely on the threat of plagiarism, as we will seldom have concrete evidence that plagiarism has occurred. This does not, however, mean that we must abandon our efforts to validate student demonstrations of learning. We just need to reframe our approach. To do this, teachers must be empowered.

It is important for administrators to support teachers in their use of professional judgment. While teachers can no longer definitively prove that students have engaged in academic dishonesty, our goal of validating that student's demonstration of what they have learned remains. This is the teacher's role, and they must be allowed to make judgments about their students' true understanding or ability. If a teacher determines that a submission does not communicate an accurate representation of student learning, they should be able to reject its validity. Administrators need to support teachers in this, or we run the risk of communicating to teachers that their judgment is not valid and their efforts to authenticate student learning are a waste of time.



To achieve this validation of student learning, teachers must use triangulation of data. They need to capture the process through which a demonstration of learning has been completed. This could be in the form of drafts, check-ins or version histories. Teachers should also take into consideration previous demonstrations of learning, classroom observations and other anecdotal evidence to help them determine if their students have shown evidence of learning at other times. Finally, conversations with students about submitted work remain essential. Administrators and parents must be confident that triangulation of data has been used to reach conclusions about the accuracy of demonstrations of student learning; otherwise, the teacher's judgment will not be respected and we will return to the stalemate between students, teachers and administrators.

Students must be held accountable to demonstrate what they have learned. If academic dishonesty has occurred, the answer is not to assign a zero and move on; the answer is to require an accurate demonstration of learning. By taking this approach, we do not put parents in a situation where they are standing between their child and a harsh academic penalty levied by the school. After all, if a student did the work once, it shouldn't be too challenging to meet those expectations again. If they can't, then that previous demonstration holds little value regardless of whether or not it was completed by the student.

We already have these tools at our disposal. *Growing Success* clearly outlines the importance of professional judgment and triangulation of data. It also leaves room for us to move away from academic penalties for potentially dishonest academic behaviour, to strategies that hold students accountable for their learning. We just need to activate these genes which, for some, have lain dormant in our educational DNA. By doing so, we can kickstart our practices to defuse the adversarial nature of the AI revolution, and together begin the process of AI-fuelled evolution.

Defusing the Revolution by Infusing Evolution

Students need to understand what AI is and what it can do. We might be afraid that exposing them to the realities of AI will only exacerbate the problem of its improper usage in the classroom, but that ship has sailed. Our students are already aware of what it can do for them. Instead, we need to broaden their understanding of the impacts that these tools can have on society. They need to understand that deepfakes and AI-generated images can be used to mislead and misinform. They need to recognize the inherent bias of these tools and how uninformed usage of AI can perpetuate cycles of discrimination and stereotypes. All of this can only be achieved if teachers understand the technology themselves.

More importantly, students need to use AI tools. Telling them what responsible use is will not be effective at producing responsible use if we do not give them opportunities to put it into practice. Students need to be guided through what is acceptable and what is not. They need opportunities to experience the augmentation of their own abilities, while

also recognizing that these results do not occur by accident; that their own knowledge, thinking and ideas are foundational components to the product. We must model the partnerships and interactions with technology that promote deeper, iterative thinking, rather than letting students engage superficially. We must demonstrate how to identify the perspectives favoured by these tools and how to engage critically with them. By doing so, students will have the opportunity to learn through the use of these tools, not in spite of them. They will understand the line between augmenting their abilities and offshoring their learning.

Failing to give students opportunities to use these tools in our classrooms will only worsen the digital divide between the students who have access to the technology at home and those who do not. As whole tools or premium capabilities are increasingly locked behind subscriptions, students who cannot afford access will be disadvantaged, not only in our classrooms, but in our future society. This is the opportunity to begin closing the digital literacy gap that exists in our schools.

It is important for us to remember that our students will never have access to weaker AI tools than they do today. We need to take up the

challenge and prepare all of our students, not just the ones who can afford access, to use these tools responsibly.

Conclusion

It is true, historically, that revolutions were bloody affairs. But evolution can be equally as intense for those who would not, or were unable to, adapt to changes in their environment. Our students are meeting the moment with open arms. They are primed for the revolution. While our profession may not currently be equipped to handle a revolution, we do have everything we need to adapt, survive and thrive in the moment. We must meet the challenge head on. We need to construct a safe space for students to learn about and experience these tools; to take measured, reasonable steps to change. It is a matter of survival. Otherwise, we will be left behind as casualties of the revolution. ▲

Payton Jacklin is the technology enabled learning and teaching contact at the St. Clair Catholic District School Board.

✉ payton.jacklin@sccdsb.net

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To get started 

2023 Member Demographic Survey

Summary findings

In November and December 2023, the OPC conducted our second Member Demographic survey. The initial survey (formerly referred to as a census) in 2020 was intended to help us better understand the identities of OPC Members and to serve as an initial benchmark. Recommendations that came out of the initial survey and report have formed the foundation guiding our work over the past few years.

The 2023 survey followed a similar pattern of questions about personal identity, and offered respondents the opportunity to make suggestions or provide feedback. It also included some new options for responses in several questions based on feedback from Members and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Committee.

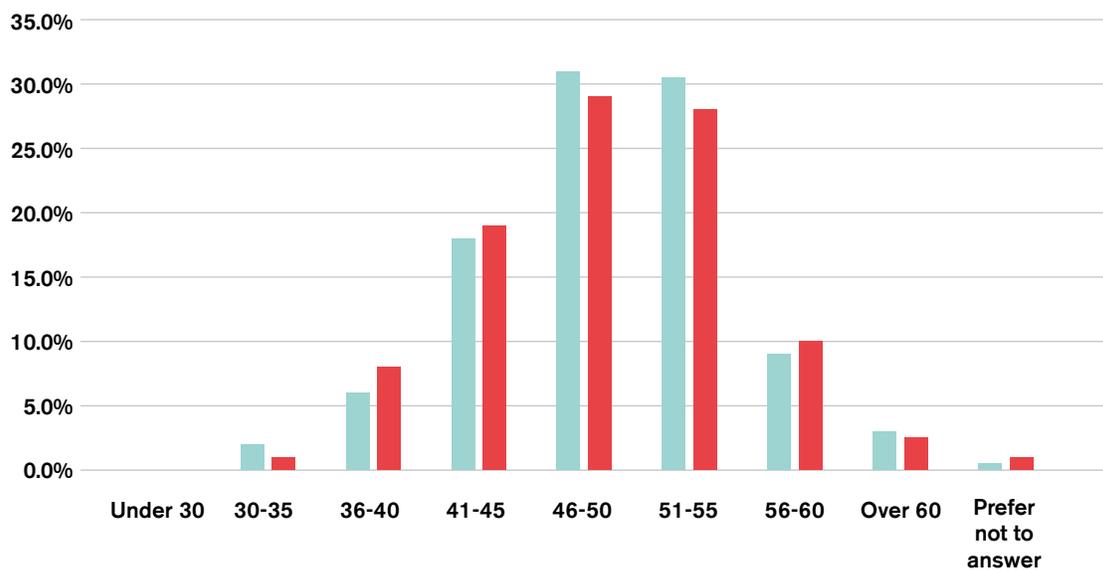
In 2023, the response rate was 36 per cent, lower than the 52 per cent on the 2020 survey. Given the increased workload over the

past few years and the distribution of several other surveys during the same time period, we are still satisfied that this provides a representative sample of who our Members are and how they identify.

Analysis of the data for trends and patterns will inform the next set of recommendations for the work of the EDI Advisory Committee and its sub-committees, OPC Executive and Council and OPC District Reps.

Some sample results from the survey

Age: The majority of OPC Members continue to be between the ages of 46 and 55.



Graph 1. Age Distribution in 2020 and 2023.

2023 2020

Racialized Identity: There was an increase in the number of responses indicating identities other than white, although the proportion of Members who identify as white continues to be higher than in the general population.

	2023 OPC Demographic Survey		2020 OPC Membership Census		Ontario (2021)
	#	%*	#**	%*	%*
North American Indigenous (First Nation, Métis, Inuit)	50	2.4%	61	2.1%	2.9%
Racialized People	370	17.8%	498	17.5%	34.3%
Asian, East (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Taiwanese, etc.)	55	2.7%	60	2.1%	6.7%
Asian, Southeast (e.g., Cambodian, Filipino, Indonesian, Malaysian, Vietnamese, etc.)	19	0.9%	10	0.4%	3.8%
Asian, South (e.g., Afghan, Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Tamil, etc.)	108	5.2%	163	5.7%	10.8%
Black (Black-Canadian, Black-African, Afro-Caribbean, etc.)	104	5.0%	122	4.3%	5.5%
Indo-Caribbean (e.g., Guyanese, Jamaican, Trinidadian, etc.)	40	1.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Latino or Hispanic (e.g., Colombian, Ecuadorian, Mexican, Peruvian, Salvadorian, etc.)	14	0.7%	16	0.6%	1.8%
Middle Eastern, West Asian or Arab (e.g., Armenian, Iranian, Iraqi, Lebanese, etc.)	28	2.4%	41	1.4%	3.5%
Global Indigenous	4	0.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pacific Islander (e.g., Fijian, Hawaiian, Maori, Polynesian, Samoan, etc.)	2	0.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	49	2.4%	86	3.0%	0.9%
White (including Caucasian and European ancestry, etc.)	1,576	76.0%	2,369	83.2%	65.7%
Prefer not to answer	25	1.2%	38	1.3%	N/A
TOTAL*	2,074		2,846		

Table 1. Racial Distribution of Respondents.

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

**Some options were not provided in the 2020 census.

Mark Your Calendar

June

4

[Webinar – Planning Ahead for School Improvement](#)

July

2

[PQP Summer Session](#)
Registration deadline: June 11

[Online Facilitated Learning: Future of Schools](#)
Registration deadline: June 16

[PDC Module 5 – Building a Digital Leadership Portfolio](#)

Registration deadline: June 18

4–5

[The Equity Leadership Journey](#)
Registration deadline: June 19

9

[Special Education for Administrators Qualification Program \(SEAQP\)](#)
Registration deadline: June 25

12

[TLTEQP Summer Session](#)
Registration deadline: June 28

August

[Navigating Leadership Transitions*](#)

19

Your First Month with OPC

22

[Navigating the Transition from Vice-principal to Principalship](#)

27

[Setting up a Documentation System](#)

29

[Making Time for Relationship Building](#)

*Registration open until the day prior to session

September

23

[Online Facilitated Learning: Antisemitism](#)
Registration deadline: September 8

28

[New Administrator Support Program](#)
Monthly meetings
Registration deadline: September 15

30

[PDC Module 1 – Principal Legal Duties and Responsibilities](#)
Registration deadline: September 16

[PDC Module 7 – Courageous Conversations](#)
Registration deadline: September 16

October

1

[ELQP Fall Session](#)
Registration deadline: September 17

5

[PQP Fall Session](#)
Registration deadline: September 14

OPC Staff Contacts

President
Ralph Nigro
president@principals.ca

Executive Director
Nadine Trépanier-Bisson
ntrepanier@principals.ca

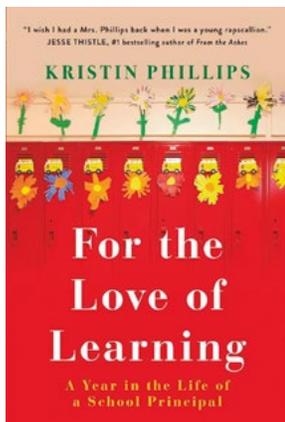
Communications
Peggy Sweeney
psweeney@principals.ca

Protective Services
Aditi Sayed
asayed@principals.ca

Professional Learning
learning@principals.ca

Membership Services
membership@principals.ca

General Inquiry
admin@principals.ca



For the Love of Learning: A Year in the Life of a School Principal

By Kristin Phillips
 Simon & Schuster
 ISBN: 9781982170684
 Reviewed by Lucy E.M. Black

For the Love of Learning: A Year in the Life of a School Principal by Kristin Phillips is an honest, revelatory look at the complex role of a school administrator. Aptly named

after the 1994 Royal Commission Report on Education in Ontario, the book highlights the difficulties inherent in being a school leader given ministry mandates, EQAO testing, board directives, strong unions and the individual needs of staff, parents and struggling students.

For those of us who have had the privilege of leading a school, this book is a testament to the multi-faceted skills that are required to juggle a myriad of expectations from many stakeholders. The book provides a candid window on the disappointments, frustrations and heartbreaks of the job, while also affording some insight into why so many of us persevere in the often-humbling and lonely role – essentially because we love kids and want to provide safe and rich learning environments for them.

The author begins with her entry to a new school, where she does not know the building, the staff, the children or their families, and yet is expected to take charge and become the instruc-

tional leader. Already an experienced and well-seasoned educator, Phillips recognizes that establishing trust and genuine caring relationships is key to her work. She works hard to communicate with anxious parents, reassure and help staff to problem-solve and build school routines that will support young people. She is able, with the support of a stellar vice-principal, to successfully engage a small core of staff. They willingly enter into discussions about how learning could and should be different for this generation of students. As a school leader, she is both an instigator and a cheerleader.

The Ontario Principals' Council has been conducting leadership studies for several years, concerned about the increasing demands placed upon system leaders. In fact, *School Principals' Work and Well-Being in Ontario: What They Say and Why It Matters* by Dr. Katina Pollock and Dr. Fei Wang confirms everything that Phillips so eloquently and compassionately makes clear.

The complexities of making a public education system work while serving a diverse community, navigating union relations with regard to holding low-performing teachers accountable, balancing personal health and well-being with the demands of the job, moving staff forward in terms of professional practice, prioritizing equity and challenging the use of technology, all with limited practical support, is not an unusual story.

Written with wisdom and grace, the book bravely captures the everyday life of a committed, passionate principal struggling to lead her school. This book should be mandatory reading for everyone who works in the school system: teachers need to know what lies behind the principal's door; board staff need to be reminded of the extraordinary challenges a principal faces; and all administrators need to be reminded that what they do matters, with the rare privilege of being able to touch hearts and change lives. ▲

Lucy E.M. Black is a retired Durham District School Board principal.

✉ olive@michaeljbblack.com



Show Up, Stand Up, Speak Up

The importance of equity and inclusion

Many school leaders carry around notebooks where they seem to write everything. But if you really want to understand the modern school leader, you need to talk to their laptop. That's me.

I know everything about Dan, and I was first assigned to him when he became a vice-principal. This guy thought he was a real hotshot. I'll concede that he got off to a good start, but he had everything to learn about running a school. Let me reassure you, I've worked with newbies before. All I can say is, buckle up and prepare to be humbled.

Partway through the school year, we needed to have a talk about the long work hours we were logging. My battery was always low and I knew that I was going to burn out. But you should have seen **him**. He was going to crash.

Dan had a great mentor as his principal. She was patient, kind, compassionate, relentless in her support of children and a real champion for trauma-informed practice. She also **almost**

always smiled through his mistakes, big and small.

Dan worked hard to be part of the team, but I don't think he ever felt like he belonged in his new school. I remember the first time he was called the n-word. That shook him badly. He was exhausted from working too much, and the racial slurs drained us both right to the core. Dan started looking for new jobs, and I was there to help. This might have been naive, but he never expected the colour of his skin to make his new job so much harder. He had never experienced anything like this in the classroom. When he finally worked up the courage to email system leadership about just how difficult the racism was and how hard it was on him, his words flooded the screen. I had trouble keeping up.

CLICK. Sent. **Silence.**

There was never any response to – or even acknowledgement of – his email. Clearly, racism was his problem to deal with, **alone**. That first year as a vice-principal was one of the most challenging experiences of his life. When parts of your identity are also attacked, the work can be overwhelming.

Now, Dan works in a new board and he has learned there are so many things that school leaders can do to support colleagues who identify as members of under-represented groups. Put equity and inclusion on your staff meeting agenda. Call your students, staff and families into teachable moments, and hire staff who support your vision for a safe and inclusive school. You matter, because we matter, because allyship matters.

Show up. Stand up. Speak up. ▲

Dan McRae is the principal of equity and inclusion for the Upper Canada DSB.
✉ daniel.mcrae@ucdsb.on.ca

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