

SUMMER 2020 VOL. 22 NO. 3

The Register

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



Designing Schools of the Future

Unlocking student wisdom

▶ SUMMER OFFERINGS ▶ YEAR IN REVIEW ▶ VAPING



Thank You

To our Members across Ontario – we want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts you are making, above and beyond your normal roles, to model learning in support of your staff, students and school communities during this pandemic period. Your leadership and commitment to learning have been invaluable during these challenging times, and for that, **we thank you.**

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Year in Review

Moving forward after significant challenges



Cover Illustration by Adrian Forrow

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Advocacy

Why it looks different this year



From the moment I became an administrator and joined the OPC, I have heard those questions about “what is the OPC doing for me?” or “when is the OPC going to put itself out there to be heard?” I believe one of the reasons, if not the main reason for these questions, is that we were all

part of a union prior to taking on the administrative role, and those unions often led with very loud voices. As such, the quieter voice of the OPC might be viewed as less effective, even when that is not the case, especially now.

The OPC has come a long way in the past 20 years in terms of our Member advocacy. When our organization first began, we had very limited status and rights under the law. It took years for us to grow, not only in terms of the services we were able to provide Members, but also in terms of our role in bargaining and advocating for fair and appropriate

employment conditions for administrators. It was not until 2012 that we were finally recognized by the Ministry of Education as the official bargaining agent for principals and vice-principals in the English public school system. This was a key achievement, not only in terms of bargaining rights, but also in positioning our association as a respected and valued partner in education.

Another significant goal that our organization worked on in the early days was growing our political voice to ensure we would be heard and consulted with when key educational decisions were

being made. This took time, ongoing small key steps and an understanding that our reality is different from that of education workers who are part of the unions. Legislatively, we can't strike, engage in work-to-rule activities or walk on or participate in picket lines. The school boards are our employer, and there could be employment consequences if we took part in any of these activities.

As a much smaller organization (we have about 5,400 Members compared to about 130,000 members of ETFO and OSSTF), we do not have the financing to engage in public advertising campaigns that the unions often use to publicly raise their concerns and promote their bargaining positions. Our advocacy comes in the form of letters, public statements and meetings with government and other education stakeholder groups. This has made it more difficult for the public, and at times our Members, to “see” our support, since we are not on the front lines with teachers and support staff or taking out ads in media outlets.

However, in the past year, with the encouragement of our Members, our Provincial Councillors and as a result of our increased profile as a critical partner in education, the OPC has found itself in a position where our opinion has been frequently sought after, and we have not shied away from making our voice heard (even when it has been in opposition to other education partners). We have met with the Minister, liaised with his office staff, spoken to other MPPs, written sev-

eral letters, released public statements and participated in media interviews.

Advocacy can take many forms. Not all campaigns are as public and high profile as others. While we can't control what ultimately ends up in a media story or what gets reported publicly, I can assure you that we do, and will continue to, advocate for our Members, our students and for conditions in schools that will ensure the success of all students. ▲

Be sure to read [A Year in Review: Moving forward after significant challenges](#) on page 28.

Stay connected with us and join our [Twitter Chats](#) using the hashtag [#OPCchat](#)



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The Register is the proud recipient of the following awards:



Happenings at the OPC ...



Some of our Members joined us on February 26th for Pink Shirt Day to show support against bullying in schools.



Principals and vice-principals contributed photos of their schools for our wonder wall installment celebrating schools throughout Ontario.



OPC staff have been taking part in monthly team building activities to further strengthen our sense of community, team collaboration and office well-being such as Pancake Tuesday (L) and lunch time winter skating (R).



In January, President Nancy Brady welcomed visitors from Nord University in Norway.



Winter SOQP candidates celebrate the completion of their course modules.

Enhanced Professional Learning

Our new name and new summer offerings

You may have noticed a change in our professional learning branding over the past several weeks. Previously known as Education Leadership Canada®, we are now Professional Learning. This change was made to be more representative of the work we do for you, and to be more meaningful to our program partners.

We have been working diligently to continue to offer the relevant professional learning you have come to expect, as well as developing new offerings including monthly webinars and [book clubs](#).

We hope to continue to offer a variety of professional learning opportunities over the coming months. In addition to the usual [Additional Qualifications](#) offerings, our Professional Learning team is planning to offer a summer learning program that is varied both in topics and delivery method.

There are currently 10 learning sessions planned for July and August:

- **July 6** (Ottawa) – International Mindedness for Linguistic and Cultural Inclusion
- **July 7** (Ottawa) – Culturally Responsive Leadership: Pathway towards empowering school culture

- **July 8** (Toronto) – Mindfulness Everyday
- **July 9** (Toronto) – Sports Informed Leadership
- **July 13** (Online) – Relationships as the Catalyst for Learning and Development with Dr. Tranter (half-day)
- **July 6-17** (Online) Module – Recruitment and Retention in the FSL School
- **August 12-14** (Toronto) – Mentor-Coaching Institute
- **August 18** (Toronto) – Equity
- **August 19** (Toronto) – Leading Professional Learning in Your School
- **August 20** (Toronto and online) – Best Foot Forward for 2020–2021: Choices to support well-being with Dr. Karen Edge

All of the details about these learning sessions, including registration links, can be found on our [website](#).

We are also partnering with [ADFO](#), [CPCO](#) and VoiceEd Radio to bring you the “Rise and Learn Principal Chats,” a [radio broadcast](#) series during the week of August 16–20. Each morning at 9:00 a.m., school leaders from across the province will be able to tune into the live broadcasts. You can listen online from wherever you

are for one hour, or go back and listen to as many broadcasts as you like. Each day will offer a different learning topic:

- **August 17** – What Will 2021 Bring? A conversation with the three principal association presidents
- **August 18** – Effectively Navigating Cyberbullying
- **August 19** – Nurturing a Growth Mindset
- **August 20** – School Leadership Beyond Truth and Reconciliation
- **August 21** – Surviving September and Beyond

Registration is not necessary. More details about the contents of each broadcast are available on our [website](#).

Finally, we will be offering an online summer [book club](#) for James Nottingham’s book *Challenging Learning*. James will join us as part of the August 19 Radio Broadcast with one or more Members from our book club.

Our team is hopeful that the variety of summer offerings will meet your specific needs. If you have any suggestions for upcoming professional learning opportunities for the fall, please share them with us at learning@principals.ca. ▲

✉ learning@principals.ca

Dangers, side effects and
consequences that teens
need to know about

By Peggy Sweeney



RISK of Vaping

S

Tobacco, alcohol, hard drugs. The list of illegal substances that young people try and use has expanded and changed over the years. The latest trend is vaping, and it has many health practitioners worried because the risks seem to be vastly misunderstood. It's popular with young people because many of them think it is a safer product than tobacco. But that doesn't appear to be true.

So, what is vaping?

While tobacco has been [grown for about 8,000 years](#), it began to be chewed and smoked in cultural and religious ceremonies about 2,000 years ago. That has given scientists and the medical community plenty of time to research its negative effects and make that information publicly available. In 2017, it was reported that about 15 per cent of Canadians, or about 4.6 million people, smoked.

In the early 2000s, a pharmacist from China named [Hon Lik](#) tried to kick his smoking habit. Finding that the nicotine patch didn't stop his cravings, he sought to create a product that was similar to a cigarette but with fewer hazardous chemicals. His work resulted in an e-cigarette. Since then, many people have traded their traditional cigarettes for e-cigarettes, but the health hazards have not decreased. In fact, in many ways, e-cigarettes may be more dangerous.

Today, we more commonly refer to the use of e-cigarettes as [vaping](#). Electrical power is used to heat a liquid solution, causing the solution to become vaporized, and condensing it into an aerosol that is breathed in by the user through a mouthpiece. The vapour is often flavoured and can contain nicotine.

[Vaping devices](#) are also referred to as mods, vapes, vape pens, e-hookahs or tank systems. They come in many shapes and sizes. Some are small and look like USB drives or pens, while others are much larger. The latest gadget is a [vaping watch](#).



In the vaping substances that contain nicotine, the [level of nicotine can vary widely](#), with some having more nicotine than a typical tobacco cigarette. Vaping products do not produce smoke, contain tobacco or involve burning. They can deliver nicotine to your body, causing you to crave it more and more, leading to addiction and physical dependence.

For schools, vaping presents a challenge due to the increasing number of young people who

are engaging in it, and the lack of understanding among young people of its risks.

Given the short time vaping has been in use, even the medical profession isn't fully aware of all the dangers associated with it. The [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#) refers to it as “tracking a moving target,” the challenge for researchers who are trying to understand the long-term health effects of e-cigarettes.

And it is not a consistent product everywhere it is sold. According to Dr. Robert Schwartz of CAMH, “We are seeing a range of devices, mechanisms and contents. Some e-cigarettes may deliver as much nicotine in 10 puffs as there is in a tobacco cigarette Other e-cigarettes may contain little or no nicotine.”

Dr. Schwartz and Dr. Laurie Zawertailo, also of CAMH, have also reported that

- carcinogenics and impurities are frequently detected in e-liquids
- e-cigarette vapour may have cell-killing effects and
- nicotine and other compounds are released into the environment and may result in passive exposure to others from e-cigarette use.

How prevalent is its use among young people?

[The 2019 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey](#) conducted by CAMH found that

- more students are now vaping than using tobacco cigarettes
- while 5 per cent of students reported smoking cigarettes, 23 per cent (about 184,000) reported using an e-cigarette
- one in eight students use e-cigarettes daily or weekly
- e-cigarette use for grades 7–12 students doubled between 2017 and 2019
- 2 per cent of Grade 7 students use e-cigarette products, rising to 35 per cent for Grade 12 students
- youth (15 to 19 years) and young adults (20 to 24 years) have the highest rates of trying vaping
- over half of the young people who vaped in the past year used a product containing nicotine.

These statistics should be troubling to everyone.

One of the challenges is the unknown. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance with [many side effects](#). Children and youth are especially susceptible to its harmful effects. Vaping with nicotine can lead to dependence, addiction, memory and concentration impairment, reduced impulse control and cognitive and behavioural problems. And teens may become dependent on nicotine with lower levels of exposure than adults. While they may think e-cigarettes are safer and less harmful than tobacco, they don't seem to understand that they are vaping nicotine and its side effects.

[Nicotine can also alter brain development](#), a concern since brains are still developing during the teen years.

FACTS

- ▶ 23 per cent of students in grades 7–12 have tried an electronic cigarette
- ▶ Vaping devices can also be used for other substances like cannabis
- ▶ Vaping devices come in a variety of shapes and sizes; some resemble a USB flash drive
- ▶ Liquids can have high levels of nicotine and come in a variety of flavours
- ▶ Vaping may not leave a lingering or identifiable smell
- ▶ Add-ons like vinyl skins or wraps can make these items harder to recognize
- ▶ Vaping products have many names such as e-cigarettes, vape pens, vapes, mods, tanks and e-hookahs
- ▶ Vaping can increase your exposure to harmful chemicals
- ▶ The long-term consequences of vaping are unknown
- ▶ Vaping nicotine can alter teen brain development

Source: [Health Canada](#)

Another big challenge is the marketing of these products. Juul, the American company that has about [three-quarters of the US e-cigarette market](#), claims that it is in the business of helping adults quit smoking. But [researchers with Stanford University](#) looking at the impact of tobacco advertising found the company's marketing was "patently youth-oriented." The device was designed to look sleek and attractive, particularly to young people, one that could be mistaken for a USB drive and could fit into the palm of your hand.

The pods come in a variety of colours and flavours, including cucumber, creme brûlée, mango and tobacco. [Juul hired influencers](#) – young people with large followings on social media – to promote its products and distribute them for free at movie and music events. Ads used themes like pleasure and relaxation, socialization and romance, and style and identity to promote the product.

[Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#) noted that, "It's impossible to review the data [in the paper]

and conclude anything other than the marketing is the major reason this product became so popular among young people." Today, the products are sold, promoted and advertised in corner stores and gas stations. It's hard to go into or pass one of these retailers without seeing the product prominently on display.

In Ontario, the [Smoke Free Ontario Act](#) prohibits smoking and vaping in any public or private schools' indoor space, outdoor grounds including playgrounds and sports fields and within 20 metres of a school. The prohibitions also include child care centres and early years programs on school properties. That hasn't stopped many students from vaping near and on school property.

Parents, educators and medical practitioners are concerned about the misinformation teens have and the ease with which young people can buy vaping products.

In December 2019, physicians writing [a report in the Canadian Medical Association Journal](#) identified a new pattern of illness related to vap-

TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT VAPING

A TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS



BEFORE THE TALK: GET THE FACTS

Vaping is not harmless

- > Vaping can increase your exposure to harmful chemicals.
- > Vaping can lead to nicotine addiction.
- > The long-term consequences of vaping are unknown.
- > It's rare, but defective vaping products (especially batteries) may catch fire or explode, leading to burns and injuries.

Risks of nicotine

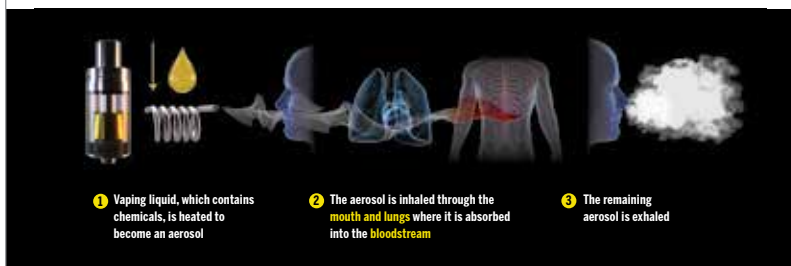
Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical. Youth are especially susceptible to its negative effects, as it can alter their brain development and can affect memory and concentration. It can also lead to addiction and physical dependence. Children and youth may become dependent on nicotine more rapidly than adults.

Although not all vaping products contain nicotine, the majority of them do, and the level of nicotine can vary widely. Some vaping liquids have low levels, but many have levels of nicotine similar or higher than in a typical cigarette. Quitting vaping can be challenging once a teen has developed an addiction to nicotine. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms can be unpleasant.

Vaping nicotine can alter teen brain development.



Even if a vaping product does not contain nicotine, there is still a risk of being exposed to other harmful chemicals.



What schools can do

- ▶ Share this article with your school community
- ▶ Organize a presentation/parent info night
- ▶ Put posters up in your school
- ▶ Ask someone from the local board of health to come in as a guest speaker
- ▶ Obtain information materials from local board of health or [Health Canada](http://HealthCanada.ca)

ing. [Dr. Karen Bosma](#), the paper's lead author, said "We wanted to put this case out there as a warning to people. Because these chemicals that are in e-cigarettes have not been extensively tested, and we don't know a lot about how they might harm the lungs."

A previously healthy teenager who had vaped daily for five months was diagnosed with a form of bronchiolitis, inflaming and blocking the small airways in the lungs. It appeared similar to "[popcorn lung](#)," a condition observed in American microwave popcorn factory workers exposed to the chemical diacetyl. The patient's breathing issues got so bad that he had to be intubated and put on life support. He did recover, but continued to have impairment and a chronic injury that lasted for months.

During that same month, the [City of Toronto's Board of Health](#) called on the govern-

ment to tighten up regulations for vaping use and sales to be more in line with current tobacco regulations. The Board wants to see all flavoured vaping products banned at stores where "minors have access."

In January 2020, the [Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#) called on the provincial government to increase taxes on vaping products to combat rising use among teenagers. The group contends that a tax increase would make the addictive products more unaffordable and less attractive to teenagers.

At Queen's Park, NDP MPP France Gelinac introduced Bill 151, [Vaping is Not for Kids Act](#). The bill aims to prohibit the promotion of vapour products by only allowing them to be sold in specialty vape stores and directing tax revenue raised from their sale to educating the public about the health risks associated with vaping.

Components of a Vape



Contents of Vaping

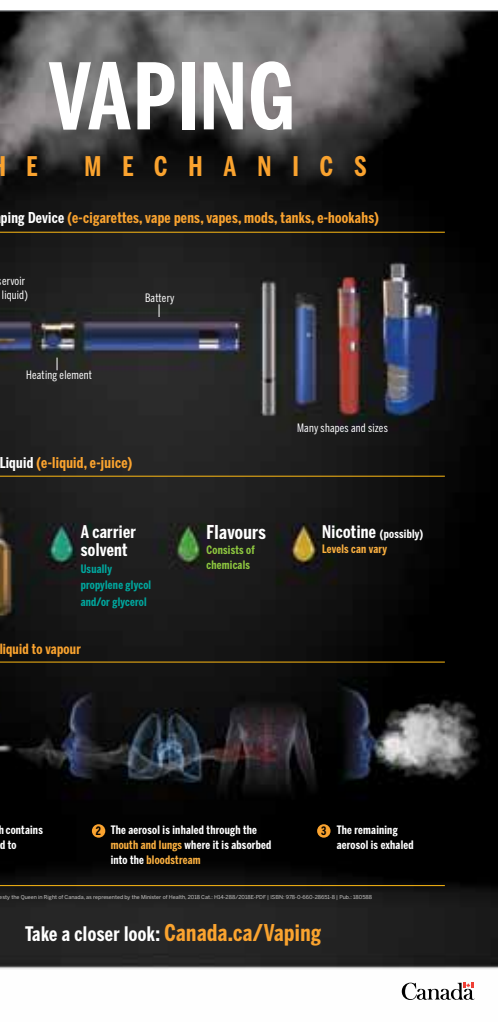


How it Works: From



- 1 Vaping liquid, which contains chemicals, is heated to become an aerosol





Canada

As a Private Member's Bill (not introduced by a government Minister), the chances of the bill proceeding through to passage are low. But in February of this year, Ontario's Health Minister, Christine Elliott, announced [further actions to protect children and youth from the health risks of vaping](#). The plan includes

- increasing access to services through Telehealth Ontario to help young people quit vaping
- restricting the retail sale of flavoured vapour products to specialty vape stores and cannabis retail stores
- restricting the retail sale of high nicotine products to specialty vape stores
- working with online retailers of vapour products to ensure compliance with age-based sales and restrictions for online sales
- requiring specialty vape stores to ensure

that vapour product displays and promotions are not visible from outside their stores

- enhancing mental health and addiction services and resources to include vaping and nicotine addiction and
- establishing a youth advisory committee to provide advice on vaping.

The province also wants the federal government to implement a national tax on vaping products.

What's important for students and their parents to know?

Vaping is less harmful than smoking, but it's still not safe

There has been an outbreak of lung injuries and deaths associated with vaping. As of February 2020, [Health Canada](#) reported 18 cases of vaping-associated lung illness. The patients presented with respiratory, gastrointestinal and other symptoms. In the United States, the [Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention](#) reported 68 deaths and almost 2,800 hospitalizations from vaping.

Research suggests vaping is bad for your heart and lungs

Nicotine is the primary agent in both tobacco and e-cigarettes, and it is highly addictive. It causes cravings and withdrawal symptoms. It is also a toxic substance, raising your blood pressure and spiking your adrenaline, which increases your heart rate and the likelihood of having a heart attack.

According to [Dr. Michael Blaha at Johns Hopkins](#), there are many unknowns about vaping, including what chemicals make up the vapour and how they affect physical health over the long term. "People need to understand that e-cigarettes are potentially dangerous to your health," says Blaha. "Emerging data suggests links to chronic lung disease and asthma, and associations between dual use of e-cigarettes and smoking with cardiovascular disease. You're exposing yourself to all kinds of chemicals

that we don't yet understand and that are probably not safe."

Electronic cigarettes are just as addictive as traditional ones

[Both e-cigarettes and regular cigarettes contain nicotine](#), which can be as addictive as heroin and cocaine. E-cigarette users get even more nicotine than they would from a tobacco product. Extra-strength cartridges have a higher concentration of nicotine and an e-cigarette's voltage can be increased to get a greater hit of the substance.

Electronic cigarettes aren't the best smoking cessation tool

Although they've been marketed as an aid to help quit smoking, e-cigarettes have not received approval as smoking cessation devices. [A recent study](#) found that most people who intended to use e-cigarettes to kick the nicotine habit ended up continuing to smoke both traditional and e-cigarettes.

A new generation is getting hooked on nicotine

There are many reasons why teens are increasingly attracted to vaping products: marketing programs aimed toward youth, candy-flavoured products, ease of purchase, the belief that vaping is less harmful than smoking, lower cost and no smell, which tends to reduce the stigma of smoking.

Vaping is a serious health issue that we don't know enough about. Until we do, it is incumbent upon us to educate our young people about its side effects, consequences and dangers. ▲

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- [Vox.com](#)
- [CBC.ca](#)



DESIGNING SCHOOLS OF

THE **Future** *are*

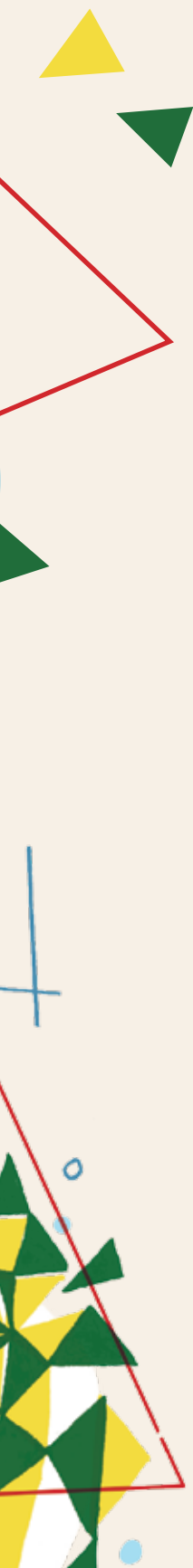
Unlocking student wisdom

By Dr. Bonnie Schmidt, CM, FRSC

Illustration by Adrian Farrow

Given a blank slate and unlimited resources, Canadian youth were asked how they would design a school learning environment on Mars. We collected 10 insights into how they would re-shape their education.





With growing awareness about the challenges and pressures faced by schools to ensure students graduate prepared to thrive in an increasingly complex world, the time was right for a collaborative and respectful national discussion about the future of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

What began as an idea for a national education conference with senior leaders morphed into a robust consultation that included five youth summits; a series of millennial roundtable discussions; and a national conference with federal, provincial and territorial deputy ministers and education, industry and community leaders.

Led by [Let's Talk Science](#) and partners¹ as part of Canada's 150th birthday celebrations, this national initiative called *Canada 2067* set out to determine whether diverse stakeholders share a common view of what is needed in Canada to evolve and shape the future of STEM education for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12.

This in-person consultation process, online polling that garnered over 500,000 inputs and research into international education policy initiatives influenced the development of what is now the [Canada 2067 vision](#) and [Canada 2067 Learning Roadmap](#).

Some of the most valuable insight came from the 1,000 Grade 9 and 10 students who participated in a thought-provoking conversation about how they would re-build the Canadian education system – on Mars.

STUDENT CONSULTATION

The full-day student summit events were designed to ignite their interest in STEM and seek their input around the six pillars identified through global education policy research:

- how we teach
- how we learn
- what we learn
- who's involved
- where education leads and
- equity and inclusivity.

Between October 2017 and April 2018, we hosted five *Canada 2067* youth summits in partnership with school districts in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and St. John's.

Students were chosen based on their interest in participating in the consultation; many said they were not particularly interested in pursuing STEM themselves. Each summit opened with a diverse series of short and inspiring "STEM

FOOTNOTE

¹ *Canada 2067* was led by Let's Talk Science with key partners including Dr. Andrew Parkin (then Mowat Centre) who led the policy research; Groundswell Projects and the Institute without Boundaries (George Brown College) designed the youth summits; Global Shapers hosted millennial roundtable discussions; Hill + Knowlton Canada designed the *Canada 2067* hub and implemented the online polling; the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and the Canadian Teachers' Federation informed and participated in the national leadership conference. The Canadian Space Agency ensured the participation of an astronaut or senior space official at every event. National funders included the Government of Canada, Trottier Family Foundation, 3M Canada and Amgen Canada.

Talks,” including space-related careers. Afterwards, students worked for several hours in small pre-assigned groups, each charged with exploring one of the identified pillars with a volunteer facilitator. Collectively, teams were asked to design the first school system on Mars.

They inspired us to document their contributions, including many novel project ideas, in a short [book](#) available for free download. There were distinct regional perspectives, but, interestingly, 10 insights surfaced prominently at every youth summit.

THE 10 KEY STUDENT INSIGHTS

HOW WE TEACH

1. Personalization & customization:

The future of STEM education doesn't look the same for everyone. Students want richer engagements with their teachers, including more one-on-one time that could help them understand their learning strengths and create custom learning experiences. They are having trouble feeling motivated by the curriculum and wish their personal interests and passions could be tapped into more often at school. Evaluations would start with capturing student goals, their effort and progress, as well as curriculum mastery.

HOW WE LEARN

2. Collaborative participation:

Students want to be active agents in their education. Overall, they are enthusiastic about the opportunity for the school to be a learning environment for everyone, including their teachers and administrators. Students envisioned being more involved in setting learning goals and tracking progress in more diverse ways. They would include more extracurricular opportunities, as well as independent work and teamwork as part of the evaluation process.



3. Technology everywhere:

The future of STEM education embraces technology. Students feel schools are being left behind when it comes to technology, and they don't understand why they often have to use the same technologies their parents used in school, instead of using their smartphones. Their dream is for the latest technologies to be accessible to all students and used to enhance their learning. Students also referenced using technology differently to improve evaluation processes.

WHAT WE LEARN

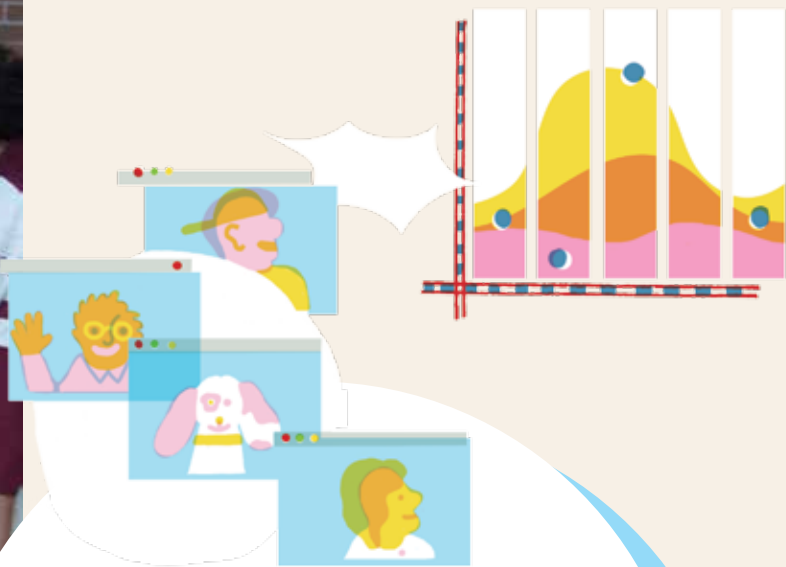
4. Changing the arc of education:

Students think STEM learning could

change the entire approach and start in the early years to develop foundational skills and language. By middle school, they'd shift to STEM for self-development and exploring their interests. High school would include more access to experts in the community, regular exposure to possible pathways and more opportunities for job experiences like co-ops. Currently, they are not motivated by the extent of theoretical instruction they receive.

5. Experiential learning:

Students would be motivated to learn and develop competencies by connecting STEM concepts to real-life prob-



Students want **richer engagements** with their teachers, including more one-on-one time that could help them understand their learning strengths and create custom learning experiences.



problems in a hands-on way. There were strong calls to collapse the disciplines, integrate STEM with humanities and arts, and use real problems to deepen their understanding of foundational theories through application. They seek more opportunities to engage in learning outside the classroom with real-world practitioners working on solutions to challenges. Evaluations would shift to include effort, behaviour and improvement. In turn, marks would

lose their current stronghold in defining student identity.

WHO'S INVOLVED

6. Mentorship:

Students crave relationships with caring and trustworthy adults and consistent exposure to experts outside of school. They want help with navigating school, including understanding the fundamental act of learning how to learn and interact with teachers. They want help in learning

to cope with stress and bullies as well as how to stay motivated. They seek advice about pathways and support building healthy lives.


WHERE EDUCATION LEADS

7. Critical thinking and problem solving:

To be resilient and flexible, students need to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students are aware that they need to become experts at deconstructing ideas and developing their own informed points of view. They stressed the value of practicing skills using relevant contexts and the importance of formalizing post-project

[Students] **seek more opportunities** to engage in learning outside the classroom with real-world practitioners working on solutions to challenges.





reflections. They are looking for more opportunities to practice sharing their ideas in diverse ways – by speaking, writing, making and prototyping.

8. Self-awareness and direction:

STEM education will help students develop self-awareness to build on strengths, improve limitations and move in new directions. They want to connect academic skills, character traits, passions, behaviours, values and aptitudes to the job market.

EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY

9. Well-being:

Students envision a culture that supports feeling good in your own skin and developing the skills to help others feel good in theirs. They are feeling the weight of stress. They want a school system where the happiness of students, teachers and administrators is paramount. They want to be in a place that is supportive and inspiring, where diversity and inclusion are practiced. Their vision for healthier schools includes healthy and affordable food, frequent breaks for movement and rest and flexible schedules that are more in harmony with the circadian rhythm of teens.

10. Space and comfort:

Students want safe, clean, bright and inspiring spaces with more natural light, large flexible spaces that support diverse uses and different types of areas, including labs, maker-spaces, kitchens and libraries. There would be spaces designed to connect socially, places to work in solitude and in collaboration. In addition to cutting-edge technology, students want environmentally responsive and sustainable buildings.

HOW THE CANADA 2067 INITIATIVE IS INFLUENCING CANADIAN EDUCATION

While the students imagined learning on Mars, in several provinces across Canada there are new initiatives underway that align with or are also reflective of the Canada 2067 recommendations.

Ontario

The Halton District School Board (HDSB) has used the Canada 2067 Learning Roadmap as a guiding framework for the development of its new I-STEM program. The areas of focus (e.g., How we learn, What we learn, etc.) anchor the work of the I-STEM Advisory Team, which is composed of diverse stakeholders (staff, parents, post-secondary, industry, community). They are referencing the guiding recommendations as the team builds and reflects on the learning for students and further program development.

The 10 key youth insights, coupled with HDSB's Student Focus Group results, provided student voice to frame the learning experiences for students. As a result, I-STEM learning is more interdisciplinary, issues-based and experiential. Students in I-STEM have opportunities that support invention and innovation to make a difference in the world. Connections with post-secondary education partners, industry and the broader community bring authentic issues-based learning opportunities to the students. The [I-STEM Program Overview](#) and [Year 1–Engineer's Toolkit](#) reflect the vision for learning in I-STEM.

Nova Scotia

[Let's Talk Science](#), in partnership with the Government of Nova Scotia, is supporting the implementation of the new science curriculum by providing professional development for school administrators that incorporates Canada 2067 recommendations.

Saskatchewan

In partnership with the Government of Sas-

katchewan, broadcast technology provides job-embedded professional learning for educators and students in a co-learning environment to build skills in computational thinking and coding.

BUILDING A FUTURE WITH CANADA 2067

As we look towards the bicentennial year when many of today's teens will be considering their retirement, it's clear that we can't wait 50 years to improve STEM learning! With students at the centre, Canada 2067 offered a powerful platform to engage diverse stakeholders in discussing the future of STEM education. The positive participation and strong alignment across all audiences indicated an understanding that change is needed and that a collaborative approach offers a constructive path forward. Keeping students engaged as active participants in their learning and learning environment will help lead to a collaborative design for the future of education, and a guide to building the resilient problem solvers of tomorrow. ▲

Dr. Bonnie Schmidt, CM, FRSC, is the President and Founder of Let's Talk Science. [@LetsTalkScience](#)

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FURTHER READING

All Canada 2067 reports are hyperlinked below and available in English and French at [Canada2067.ca](#). Additionally, videos from the youth summits and national leadership conferences are also available online.

CANADA 2067 LINKS

Canada 2067 Learning Framework – overview ([English](#) / [French](#))

Canada 2067 Learning Framework – full ([English](#) / [French](#))

Research Backgrounder – overview ([English](#) / [French](#))

Research Backgrounder – full ([English](#) / [French](#))

Youth Insights Book ([English](#) / [French](#))

Youth Insights overview ([English](#) / [French](#))

Youth Summit Videos ([overview](#) / [event page-English](#) / [French](#))

Global Shapers Millennial Report ([English](#) / [French](#))

National Leadership Conference ([English](#) / [French](#))

Principal Well-being

Strategies and coping mechanisms in times of uncertainty

By Dr. Katina Pollock and Dr. Fei Wang

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every facet of the public sphere, and public education has been hit especially hard. For education workers who already experience high levels of stress, the rampant uncertainty is introducing new stressors that can and likely will negatively impact their well-being. Although some things will eventually return to normal, most public sectors, including education systems, will likely not return to “business as usual.” As such, it has become even more crucial for principals to focus on their own well-being and develop strategies and healthy coping mechanisms that they will be able to rely upon for years to come.

Until recently, well-being research and initiatives in public education focused predominantly on students and teachers. As readers of this magazine know, principal well-being is also critically

important. The majority of our research has been on principals' and vice-principals' work in Ontario. In the last 10 years, we have witnessed some worrying trends in how work intensification is

negatively influencing principals' overall well-being. As reported in the previous issue of *The Register*, principals are being increasingly exposed to violence in their work. According to the [2018 ETFO report](#), 84% of principals and vice-principals in the province were directly involved in an incident of student violence.

In 2019, we conducted a study that specifically focused on the principals' well-being in Ontario and British Columbia. A virtual survey was sent to participating OPC principals that addressed seven components of their well-being.

The survey had a response rate of 36%. We used [Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education](#) to help define our terms and frame the survey. For example, we used the framework's definition of wellness – a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that people feel when their cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met – to inform and structure the survey. At the time of this publication's release, the survey data is still being analyzed, but has been subjected to descriptive statistics.

In this article, we aim to use this preliminary analysis to provide a snapshot of our findings on Ontario principals' well-being and offer some strategies for supporting it.

OVERALL WELL-BEING

The survey asked principals about their overall well-being. Of those who responded, 44% indicated that they believed their well-being to be good or excellent. On the other hand, 25% responded being neutral while 30% indicated that their well-being was poor or very poor (Figure 1).

We also wanted to know more about their social, cognitive, psychological, emotional, spiritual and physical well-being.

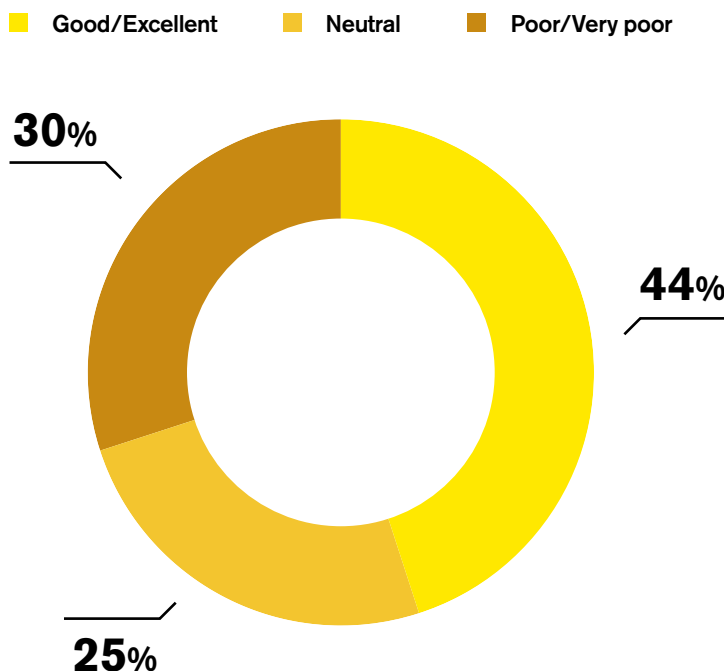
Social Well-Being

Although 62% of the principals felt that their social well-being at work was good or excellent, 38% felt it was neutral, poor or very poor (Figure 2). Similarly, although 52% reported feeling respected at work, 42% reported feeling isolated. Other feelings included supported (40%), connected (38%), accepted (36%), satisfied (28%) and welcomed (28%). There were also those who felt unsupported (29%), distanced (27%) and dissatisfied (22%).

In terms of positive work relationships, a majority of participants often or always experience positive work relation-

FIGURE 1

OVERALL WELL-BEING



ships with students, vice-principals, school support staff, administrative assistants and teachers, while 16% indicated this was not the case with union representatives.

Cognitive Well-Being

Fifty-four per cent of principals indicated that their cognitive well-being at work was good or excellent, and 46% indicated their cognitive well-being was neutral, poor or very poor. The majority of participants (85%) indicated that they were able to make decisions under high amounts of pressure, with 82% being able to initiate tasks.

Psychological Well-Being

While 46% of respondents indicated feeling good or excellent about their overall psychological well-being at work, 54% indicated their psychological well-being at work was neutral, poor or very poor. More encouragingly, 86% indicated that

- Good/Excellent
- Neutral/Poor/Very poor

FIGURE 2

SOCIAL WELL-BEING

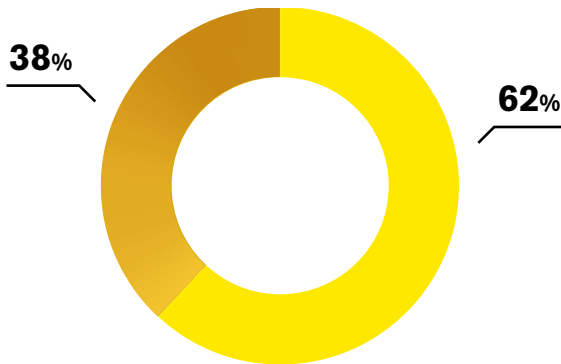
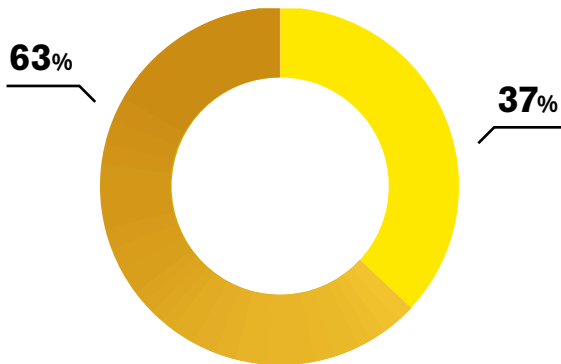


FIGURE 3

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



they often or always feel they have developed as a principal since they began the role and 76% reported that they often or always feel confident and positive about themselves as a principal.

Emotional Well-Being

About a third (37%) of participants indicated that their emotional well-being at work was good or excellent and 63% indicated it was neutral, poor or very poor (Figure 3).

When asked which adjectives described how their work made them feel emotionally, 569 out of 860 respondents chose frustrated. Despite this, 44% indicated that they are often or always satisfied with their work and 69% reported to be often or always passionate about their work.

Spiritual Well-Being

When asked about their overall spiritual well-being, 56% of the participants indicated that they were neutral, which was not unexpected given they work in the secular public school system. However, almost 40% of those who responded indicated that their spiritual practices provide them with a sense of direction and purpose at work.

Physical Well-Being

For physical well-being, 2% indicated it was excellent, 24% said good and 74% indicated they had neutral, poor or very poor physical well-being.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT PRINCIPALS' WELL-BEING

Draining Situations

According to the survey data, the top three things that contribute to draining situations for principals at work are

- lack of special education support/resources
- volume of emails and
- mental health issues among students.

These top three contributors were also the same when we surveyed OPC [principals in 2013](#), OPC [vice-principals in 2017](#) and [ADFO French and French-Catholic principals in 2019](#).

Safety

Draining situations are also connected to safety issues. The [2018 ETFO survey](#) reported that Ontario elementary teachers have experienced increased rates of violent incidents at

... principals can still develop a regime of both personal and professional strategies to help promote their own wellness and safety on an individual level.

work. Principals work in these same schools and are not immune to these safety issues. Although there has been a strong emphasis on well-being and wellness in the public education sector, the notion of safety has not always been associated with or included in well-being discussions.

Other than the leading research emerging from [Australia](#) (Riley 2019) the voices of school principals who have experienced their own safety issues are fairly absent from the literature. In this survey, principals reported experiencing passive-aggressive behaviours, gossip and slander, escalated conflicts and quarrels, false accusation, threats and violence and harassment.

For the purposes of this article, we will focus on four of these issues.

1. Discrimination

While 46% indicated they had not experienced discrimination, others experienced various forms of discrimination such as gender, age, race, sexual orientation, religion or ability.

2. Harassment

Only 16% indicated that they have not been harassed in their principal role. For those who were, almost three quarters indicated that they were harassed by parents(s)/guardian(s)/family member(s) and almost a third were harassed by a teacher or teachers.

3. Physical assault

Over one-third indicated that they had been physically assaulted, while 36% indicated that they were not. Most of the assaults were from students.

4. Threats

Only 14% indicated that they have never been threatened. The top two groups of aggressors were parents(s)/guardian(s)/family member(s) and students.

Strategies

Although many of the issues concerning well-being require changes at the system level, principals can still develop a regime of both personal and professional strategies to help promote their own wellness and safety on an individual level. An overall comprehensive approach to well-being is essential and will likely include practices that attend to all aspects of wellness.

The following strategies point to the wide variety of available options for administrators.

1. Take inventory of your work stressors

Most principals agree that their work involves a number of stressors. New work contexts, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, can present other unintended consequences and stressors. What is considered a stressor depends on several factors, ranging from individual personal leadership resources to school demographics.

Building on advice from the [American Psychology Association](#) (APA), and in the context of uncertainty regarding how public education will proceed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, you first need to determine what your individual work stressors are and how you react to them. How you track them is also very individual. The key is to not merely identify your work stressors, but also to determine what your reactions are.

As you name and document your stressors and reactions over time, patterns emerge in terms of what and where particular kinds of events and activities can trigger particular kinds of thoughts and emotions, which in turn elicit specific reactions. Naming these

Establishing a physical activity routine during extreme times of change can increase the probability that the positive habit will continue when a new normal is established.

stressors and patterns are a crucial foundation for making informed decisions and actions about your well-being. We suggest that stress inventory be a continual exercise that is revisited periodically as your work environment changes, rather than a one-off.

2. Develop healthy responses

We all respond to stress, but the key is to strive for healthy responses. In our study, we asked principals how they cope with a draining day at work. The top five responses were spending time with family/friends/pets, watching TV/movies, talking with family/friends, physical activity/exercising and talking with colleagues.

The manner in which a strategy is used is equally if not more important than the strategy itself. For example, eating and sleeping could potentially be both beneficial and destructive. Eating well and sleeping eight hours a night could contribute to a person's well-being, but over- or undereating and over- or under sleeping could result in or exacerbate physical and mental health problems.

3. Find a new physical activity routine.

In our [past qualitative research](#), principals often indicated that they intend to be more physically fit and physically healthier. Many did have gym memberships and personal trainers but they did not take advantage of them because they did not have the time or were too exhausted. While recent physical distancing restrictions have made it impossible to attend the gym, it has also uncovered creative ways for individuals to maintain good physical health and demonstrated that physical fitness can be a part of a person's life without having to enrol in formal programs at a separate location.

Establishing a physical activity routine during extreme times of change can increase the probability that the positive habit will continue when a new normal is established. Many magazines have created [lists](#) of the best and most highly rated fitness and nutrition apps, which are a good place to start looking for one that might work for you.

4. Maintain good sleep hygiene

Years of research have demonstrated that sleep and stress are mutually informing: stress can disrupt sleep and lack of sleep or sleep loss can increase stress levels (Vgontzas et al. 1998; Vgontzas and Chrousos 2002). Sleep loss can negatively influence cognitive, physical and emotional well-being. Having good sleep habits is often referred to as good sleep hygiene. There are several great resources available for free that principals can take advantage of, such as those created by the [National Sleep Foundation](#). Some of the strategies include creating and sticking to a sleep schedule, evaluating where you sleep in terms of temperature, use of light, mattress and pillows and avoiding other things that can disrupt sleep like alcohol and smoking.

5. Manage your use of email

One of the most prevalent issues that principals deal with is the overload of emails. In this study, principals reported spending 10.5 hours per week on emails. Managing email is not as simple as merely ignoring them or hoping this mode of communication will eventually go away; nor is trying to simply handle them faster an efficient way to deal with email overload. How to manage your emails is a very individual endeavour, making it difficult to implement universal support across an entire school system. We suggest strategies such as setting boundaries around email use, reading them once and using email folders.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a great sense of uncertainty. The pandemic and its impact on public education will likely continue to perpetuate principals' work intensification. This is a critical time – principals must not only support their students and staff, but also take their own health and well-being seriously. Amidst all of the uncertainty, this can be an opportunity for school leaders to assess their wellness and create positive habits that will promote well-being for the rest of their careers. ▲

A copy of the full well-being study report will be [posted here](#) in late spring 2020.

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Year in Review



Moving forward after
significant challenges

By Protective Services Team

Illustration by Anthony Tremmaglia



At the time of the writing this article, OECTA and ETFO had reached tentative agreements. OSSTF was still in negotiations with the government. Schools were closed due to the pandemic with no confirmed date for return.

The 2019–20 school year has been heavily impacted by labour action. As a result, this has not been a typical year in Ontario, as labour action has meant that it is not “business as usual” in our schools. EQAO assessments have been cancelled, strikes have caused schools to be closed to students, extracurriculars have been impacted and administrators have been unable to work on school improvement planning with their staff. And then in March, these challenges were further heightened by the global pandemic in our communities and across the world.

It has been a taxing year, as principals and vice-principals have worked hard to maintain safe environments for students while the escalating job action has disrupted the school environment. This is part of labour relations; the push and pull of negotiations includes the strategy of employing job sanctions. But because of the legacy of a strong education system already in place before this year started, we have been able to deal with the challenges in part by relying on the strong relationships nurtured over many years. This year in particular, school administrators have demonstrated their collective ability to separate their staff relationships from the issues at hand. It is important that you continue to value your staff and recognize that labour action is part of working in a unionized environment.

Once new collective agreements are ratified, principals and vice-principals will need to familiarize themselves with each employee group’s agreement and the implications of these various agreements at the school level. Each district OPC will need to advocate for school board training sessions that provide guidance regarding how to do that.

As provincial bargaining winds down, it is important to remember that the process has been exhausting for all parties. Union members have been obligated to follow the job sanctions prescribed by their union. The rising tension of following these directives, the anxiety of waiting for a resolution, the loss of wages and dealing with the public have all taken a toll on our staff members. It is difficult for them to stop doing work that they normally do. At the same time, principals and vice-principals have taken on work that we typically are not required to do. We have also had to deal with the reactions of students, parents and the public to labour disruption while continuing to support our school community. All of this leads to complexity and can affect professional relationships within a school.

To rebuild relationships with our staff, principals and vice-principals will need to consider the dynamics on our own team. Are there individuals who feel disillusioned with the process of labour action? Have some individuals alienated themselves from others? Are some team members showing signs of mental or physical strain? It is important for school leaders to recognize that at the end of job action, everyone



may not be able to “let go” of the situation and return to the pre-labour climate easily. Taking the time to restore individual relationships, as well as the dynamic of the entire school team, will be important.

In your role as school leader, consider how to help people repair these differences. At the time of writing this article, the COVID-19 virus is spreading throughout our communities and social distancing is very much the new norm. Typically, we would encourage you to initiate face-to-face contact with your staff. However, there are ways to connect virtually as well. Consider connecting through email, text messages and social media. Perhaps a group chatroom could be set up so that people are able to connect as a group and see how everyone is doing. Using a virtual platform such as Google Hangouts, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams and Zoom is another way to enhance communication within groups and help dispel that sense of isolation that many are feeling during this time of uncertainty.

Depending on the dynamics within your own school, it may be necessary to re-establish your relationship with your school’s union representative(s) and develop plans to implement the elements of the new collective agreements. Moving forward, you need to continue to consult and work with these representatives, to help rebuild the collaborative climate in the school and facilitate new initiatives.

In terms of community relationships, there is no doubt that families have been impacted by labour action. During this last round of negotiations, public opinion seemed to be quite supportive of the employee groups. However, others may not have been, and it will be important to help re-establish relationships our school community.

Tips for local districts

- Continue to meet with your senior staff, in person or virtually, to discuss issues that impact the work of principals and vice-principals as labour unrest ends.
- Advocate for training/resources for Members regarding the collective agreements and provide feedback to the senior staff about the type of training/resources needed.
- Work towards having principal and/or vice-principal representation on committees that include board/school operations. Share with senior staff the benefits of having school leaders on these committees who report back to the local district.
- Continue to reach out to local Members to understand issues that arise at the school level.
- Continue to communicate with your PST District Support Consultant.

Tips for principals and vice-principals in schools

- Read the new collective agreements and ask for clarification from your Supervisory Officer and/or Human Resources regarding implementation of specific issues that arise.
- Meet with the union representatives in your school to re-establish good communication, positive relationships and a schedule of regular check-ins.
- Connect with your staff and draw out the things you share as a team. Encourage everyone to work in a climate of mutual respect as you work together to improve student outcomes.
- Reach out to parents and communicate with them to help allay their concerns regarding the lost instructional time and their child’s progress.
- Contact your School Council Chair and discuss the practicality of and plans for moving forward on any future initiatives and projects.
- Share any concerns with your local OPC reps.
- Monitor your own health and seek professional help from your Employee Assistance Program and/or Starling Minds as needed.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SUPERVISORY OFFICER ASSOCIATION (OPSOA) COMMENT

When we (OPSOA) conceptualized the writing of this article, the focus was on “what happens next after labour unrest is over?” Then the pandemic hit and our school year changed significantly. The lessons learned during this time of challenge from both the labour unrest and from the COVID-19 pandemic will serve us well as we move forward. We are better together. School and system administrators have come together like never before to develop solutions to problems that meet systemic needs, as well as needs at the individual school level. This type of conversation needs to continue if we are to grow stronger as a school system.

We have actively sought out opportunities to speak with one voice, to share the best of what we have to offer and to learn with and from one another. The trust that has been built has allowed individuals to ask for help, to offer a hand and to politely and professionally disagree and challenge the status quo.

Labour unrest may cause some people to act in ways that we have never seen. And we've never been

through anything like the COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot underestimate the effect that both of these challenges have had on all those with whom we work. Everyone has a story. We cannot be expected to know each story, each result or anticipate each reaction. We can, however, be present, be understanding and ask how we can help. We have always taken care of those we lead; it is time to ensure we take care of each other – to take care of the caregivers. Take time to check in on a colleague who may be a single administrator, one who may be finishing their career during these uncertain times, or even the boss!

For some, both the labour situation and the COVID-19 pandemic have been traumatic events. Access the best learning out there about intervention and postvention strategies related to dealing with trauma. They will be invaluable resources as we move forward, returning to our new normal.

Remember, you are not alone.

Karen Edgar, the current President of OPSOA, is with the Thames Valley DSB.



Think about ways to communicate positive messages to your school community about the work you, your staff and your students are doing. Look for ways to re-engage the parents and focus the community on how best to support the students within your school.

During negotiations, we have monitored our districts and their progress using our own check-in model by using Zoom meetings to gather feedback about local issues and to help problem-solve the concerns that were presented. The feedback from these meetings has been very positive, and it has established a weekly connection between our district support consultants and the local representatives. As we grappled with issues, it was important for local leaders from across the province to hear how other districts were handling various issues such as EQAO and report cards, and they are advocating locally for their colleagues.

It was gratifying to see solutions that were developed locally by one board being shared and used in other boards to help work through the situation in their own area. We appreciated the strong sense of partnership that emerged from these discussions and believe that this two-way communication between local OPC groups and their senior teams needs to continue. Although these weekly meetings were intended to provide additional support during labour action, the collaboration between local districts and PST District Support Consultants will continue to benefit our organization and our membership going forward.

To strengthen the relationship between senior teams and our local groups, it is important to acknowledge that the spirit of respect and cooperation that existed during this challenging time needs to become the new norm. What we experienced is characterized by Leithwood (2012; 2013) as “productive working relationships” ([Ontario Leadership Framework](#)). We know that as we move forward, we are going to continue to grapple with complex issues that require the same type of collective problem solving.

If classes resume before the school year closes, it is important to recognize that we cannot make up for all of the disruption to the school year in a shortened period of time, such as the school improvement planning process which has been impacted by both labour action and pandemic isolation. Rather, staff should spend their time reconnecting with students and restoring relationships with an aim to finishing the school year as positively as possible.

As the school year comes to a close, it is important to reflect on our own personal well-being and how we have managed the stress of

● Taking the time to restore individual relationships, as well as the dynamic of the entire school team, will be important.

roles during the past year. It has been a lonely time for many, as labour action halted the collaborative team activities that many of you find so rewarding. Taking stock of our own personal health and finding the time to use the resources we need to stay healthy is important as we head into the summer months.

As we reflect on the 2019–20 school year, let’s shift the conversation from the differences that may have separated us to the similarities that we share. Revisit our common goal of helping students realize their potential, both academically and with respect to their well-being. With the year that has been, it is even more imperative that we work together to help stabilize and support our student communities. ▲

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RESOURCES RELATED TO TRAUMA/TRAUMATIC EVENTS

- [School Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response](#)
- [Ontario Principals' Council](#)

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Seeking Reconciliation Champions

Framework for
reconciliation in
Ontario schools

By Minou Morley
Illustration by Don Chrétien



We are conscious of the fact that many of our high needs students self-identify as Indigenous, and we are working to ensure that these students get the attention and support they need and deserve.

The Assembly of First Nations and the Government of Canada both assert that Indigenous youth are more likely to live in poverty and die by suicide than are their non-Indigenous peers, and much less likely to graduate from secondary or postsecondary schools.



These bleak facts and the disproportionate crossover between high needs students and self-identified Indigenous students, weigh heavily on my mind, and those of many educators. Currently, there is a lot of pressure on the education system to fix the damage caused by affronts to Indigenous culture, including the issues related to residential schools, and on making schools a welcoming space for all learners, especially Indigenous children. Settler educators (non- Indigenous) struggle not only with what to do, but how to do it, and with the quest to help guide all students on a path of reconciliation.

While there is no one way that would appropriately apply to all schools in Canada, understanding the protocols and traditions of the peoples on whose Territory a school is situated is key, I am including some common

themes that I have noticed in my research and practice.

The Algonquin/Anishinaabe are the traditional Knowledge Keepers of the Ottawa area, where I live, and as such my ideas and experiences around reconciliation are heavily influenced by them. In keeping with Anishinaabe protocols, I will introduce myself so I and my thoughts can better be situated.

I am an American born Canadian of English, Scottish, Welsh, Bavarian and Austrian decent. Born in Providence, Rhode Island – home of the Narragansett People – I was raised in Kingston, Ontario – the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe.

For the last three decades, I have lived in Ottawa, Algonquin/Anishinaabe Territory. In graduate school at Queen's University, I shared an office with a student from K'ómoks



First Nation, Sharlene Frank, who gave her invaluable feedback before this went to print. For more than 30 years she has patiently been my mentor and my friend, and the first of many Indigenous people who have taken the time to help teach me “in a Good Way” – a way that honours tradition and spirit. I feel a personal and professional responsibility to contribute, no matter how small, to the growing body of resources aimed at supporting non-Indigenous educators in bringing reconciliation into their schools. I believe that settler educators have a role in this.

In introducing my background, I don’t claim to have any expertise in Indigenous culture. I do have 30 years as an educator, over 10 of those as an administrator. I acknowledge working, living and benefiting from a system laden with systemic racism towards, and the marginalization of, First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. I am grateful for the teachings they have shared with me.

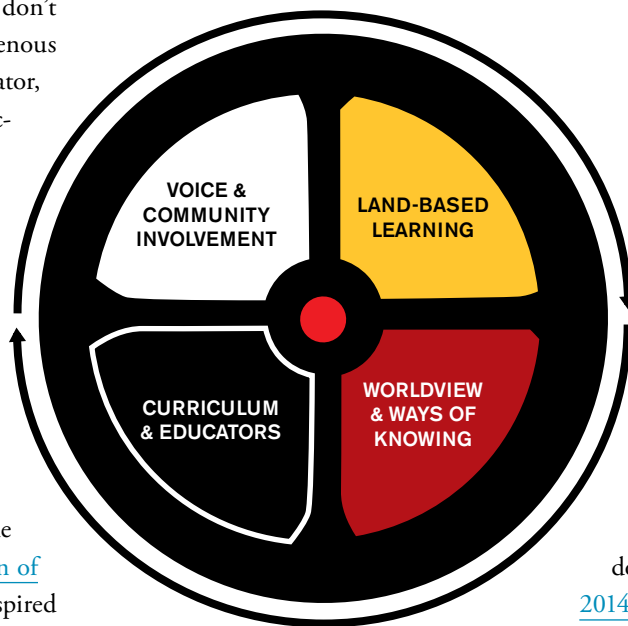
The path to reconciliation in Canada is complex. Centuries of racist policies and practices have immersed us in a situation where trust is, at best, fragile. As per the findings of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(TRC\)](#), many events have conspired to cause Canadians to question and challenge education about, and for, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. As a result, many teachers and administrators are trying to facilitate reconciliation in their schools.

The TRC (2015) cites 94 [Calls to Action](#). My focus in this article is Number 63, “we call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues.” Specifically, Subsection 3, “building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect”. The journey to undertake this challenge at a school level

is complicated, but possible if we take small steps often.

“Building student capacity for intercultural understanding” implies Indigenous education for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This further implies that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators need to do the work.

The issue is whether non-Indigenous educators have the skills, knowledge or right to teach Indigenous content and/or reconciliation.



Source: *Medicine Wheel Framework for Reconciliation in Schools* (Morley 2019).

Since not every educator or school has access to an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper or Elder, mechanisms are needed to ensure educators are fulfilling this responsibility and in a Good Way.

The path to reconciliation must be built on a foundation of awareness and knowledge of our country’s colonial history, and its continued impact. Echoing the observations of [Senator Murray Sinclair](#) (TRC 2015), education was central to the problems created by coloniza-

tion and will have a crucial role in the healing of our country. There are both short and long-term steps necessary to introduce and maintain reconciliation in a school. And no doubt each school’s path will look a little different.

My own findings indicate that reconciliation in schools can be managed by sorting the process into four main categories:

- Indigenous worldview and ways of knowing
- land-based learning
- voice and community involvement and curriculum and educators.

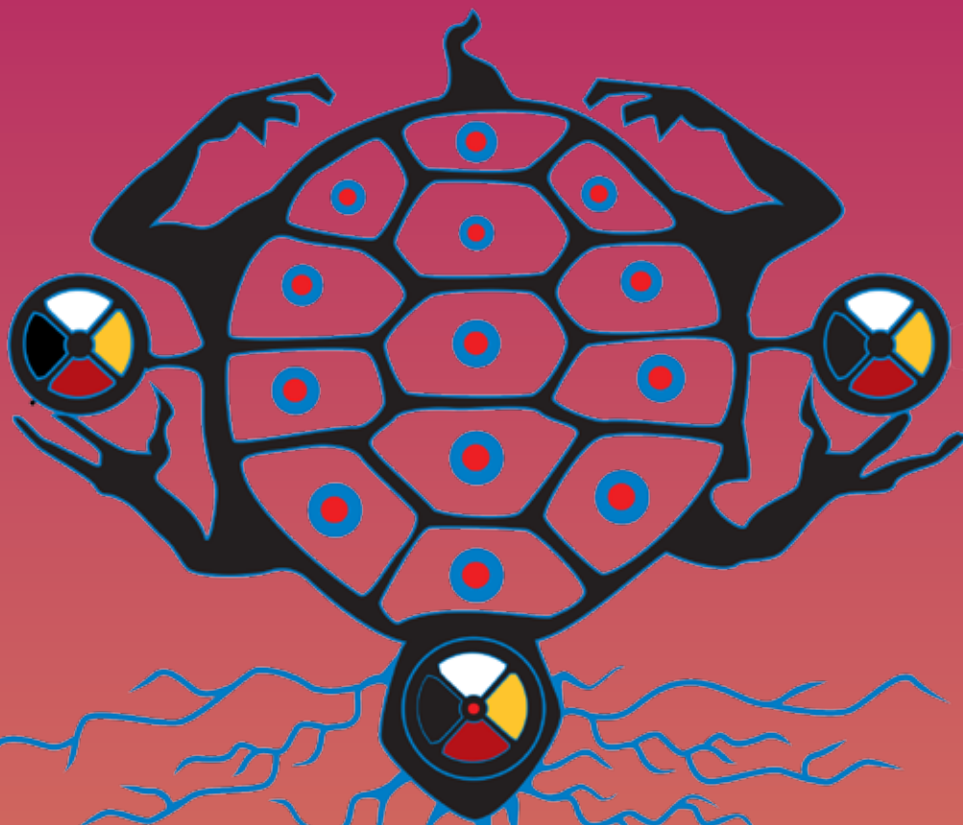
There are those who argue that only Indigenous people have the right to “Indigenize”. Until there are Knowledge Keepers, Elders and/or cultural support workers in every school and equitable representation of staff, settler educators will have to work as best they can to prevent further generations from not understanding this history.

The framework Medicine Wheel for reconciliation in schools is my own interpretation of the literature, based on teachings that have been shared with me and the readings I have done. I took inspiration from [Bell \(2013, 2014\)](#), [Morcom \(2018\)](#), [Marsden \(2019\)](#) and [Torrez \(2014\)](#). I accept full responsibility for any misrepresentation – it was not deliberate, and I have tried to organize my thoughts in a respectful way.

As I read through the literature, the four quadrants manifested themselves, and admittedly there was overlap and interconnection amongst them. Learning about the Medicine Wheel is a lifelong process and I acknowledge that I am still a beginner and am early in my learning journey.

Worldview and Ways of Knowing

An Anishinaabe worldview is closely tied to the teachings of the Medicine Wheel. In her book



THE PATH TO RECONCILIATION

must be built on a foundation of awareness and knowledge of our country's colonial history, and its continued impact.

Ensouling Our Schools (2018), [Katz](#) summarizes: “The many teachings contained within what we now refer to as the Medicine Wheel taught us about our relationship as people to the Earth and natural world around us – including the parts of ourselves, the stages of our lives, and the seasons.”

The Wheel teaches us that everything is connected and that ideas/understandings can often be categorized into four distinct but overlapping quadrants. Where Western thinking is more linear (for example, timelines, tables, past/present) and compartmentalized, Indigenous knowing is more spiritual, circular and interconnected.

The way that we think and conduct ourselves, what we value, the language we speak and so much more are anchored in our worldview. Educators have an important role in building bridges between differing worldviews. Reconciliation is

grounded in knowing “the truth” (from different perspectives) and in cultural understanding.

Together, settlers and Indigenous people have a vested interest in decisions being made regarding educational and social policy, as well as global truths around the health of Mother Earth. These teachings need to be at the core of what we do in schools.

Land-Based Learning

Indigenous knowledge systems are informed by local ecologies ([Battiste 2013](#), [Armstrong 2017](#), [Wall Kimmerer 2013](#)). “This land was – and still is – Turtle Island, already inhabited for well over 10,000 years by thriving traditional territories, bands and confederacies of Indigenous people. And we’re still here ...” ([Mills n.d.](#)). Although the multigenerational

connection to “place” was lost to many settlers when they left their homelands, explicit discussion of the implications of that warrant further investigation in classrooms. Educators need to explicitly teach our connection to, and dependence on, the land.

Land-based learning is grounded in reciprocity. That is, one should not take without giving. There is a deep and relentless belief that everything on Earth has a purpose and is interconnected. We are welcome to take for ourselves from the Earth’s bounty, but the expectation is that something is always given in return (gratitude, an offering of tobacco, respect) and that we take only what we need – the needs of future generations always in our minds. Learning from the land can easily be integrated into daily practice in schools and is naturally cross-curricular.

Curriculum Content and Educators

Curriculum is so much more than what is taught and the amount of time we teach it. It includes how the school day and year are structured, what we publicly display, the teaching materials we use, what we wear, what is shared on the announcements and in newsletters, the order of the subjects on the report card, policies around bullying, waste management and how knowledge is assessed and evaluated.

These aspects of daily life in schools need to be considered. These things speak to what we value. Acknowledging the hidden curriculum and privilege and their role in maintaining dominance is essential. Examining each aspect of the curriculum, critically, is necessary to understand systemic inequities and ones that manifest in our classrooms as well. Teaching is a political act.

In Ontario, there has been a gradual increase in Indigenous content in many aspects of the curriculum (e.g., science, language arts, mathematics). There are many resources to support Indigenous teachings for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, who live either on or off reserves. These resources are readily and freely available. There is much information about talking circles, which can be con-

ducted in classrooms, during staff meetings and with parents and other members of the school community.

Voice and Community Involvement

Voice is a broad term by which I mean to include voice in literature, face-to-face interactions, lectures, performances, social media, radio, podcasts and any other way that Indigenous input can be accessed. For non-Indigenous educators, it is critical that authentic Indigenous resources are consulted and credited for the teachings we share with our students.

It is important to help students understand that there are many distinct First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who may have some overlapping cultural ideologies, but ultimately have unique worldviews. Learning will involve listening and observing, inviting Indigenous Knowledge Keepers to school events and into classrooms. Indigenous presence needs to be normalized and, at the same time, honoured.

Conclusions

Like [Dion \(2008\)](#), I “recognize public school classrooms as significant sites for the production and reproduction of dominant ways of knowing and ask what it would take for things to be otherwise.” There are small steps that educators can take, such as welcoming Indigenous speakers and featuring Indigenous resources. In addition, self-location is an important way to begin school gatherings.

Every school needs a champion, a point person. That is, an educator who is passionate about Indigenous culture and teachings and willing to connect with the community to open the school to do the work, to do the research and share the findings, to acquire resources and share them.

If you can't be that educator yet, then listen to someone who is. Be open. Doing reconciliation work requires mental, emotional, physical and spiritual labour and homework. We need to reflect on our “truth” and our way

of knowing by continuing to question our assumptions and values.

By critically examining our own worldview and ways of knowing, by leading learning from the land, by understanding and questioning the role of curriculum and educators in reconciliation and by opening our spaces to Indigenous voices and community involvement, we can help all of our students on their journey towards reconciliation. No matter where you are on your path, my hope is that this framework will be useful in understanding the work. ▲

Minou Morley is a teaching vice-principal with the Ottawa-Carleton DSB. This writing is based on the generous teachings shared by the Indigenous community in Ottawa, experience working in the Ottawa public school system and through course work in the Master of Education program at the University of Ottawa. She is now pursuing Doctor of Education in the educational leadership program at the University of Western Ontario.

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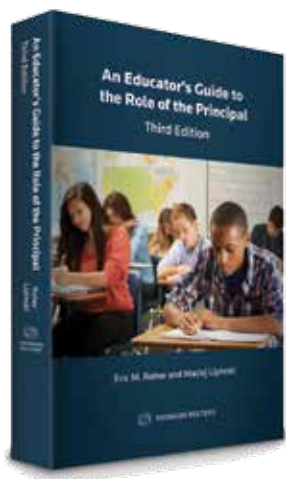
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Educator's Guide to the Role of the Principal, Third Edition

By Eric Roher and Maciej Lipinski
Thomson Reuters
ISBN: 978-0-7798-9143-6

In Ontario, school administrators are increasingly working within complex, multifaceted environments that require a broad range of skills. Eric Roher and Maciej Lipinski's most

recent publication, *An Educator's Guide to the Role of the Principal, Third Edition*, brings a legal lens to the dynamic and ever-changing role. While it would be impossible to fully encompass the "role" within a single volume, this book provides a comprehensive and practical analysis of the role and legal responsibilities in Ontario today. They capture the diverse and oftentimes competing legal obligations faced by principals by addressing a wide-range of topics including labour relations, privacy and confidentiality, student attendance and managing medical conditions in schools. Drawing on Roher's extensive experience in education law provides the reader with an invaluable perspective on the legal landscape that principals must work within.

We are in a tumultuous time in our sector. This book is a helpful reminder of the core legal duties to which principals must adhere. In a time when there are significant opinions and debates about

Ontario's education system, Roher and Lipinski's insights effectively disentangle a principal's legal obligations from the complex political and social climate in which we find ourselves.

The book is a comprehensive introductory guide to education law for principals. It discusses the major issues that our Protective Services Team encounters daily, including

- labour relations and collective agreements
- legal liability
- privacy and confidentiality
- emergency response
- teacher performance appraisals
- dealing with parents
- school attendance
- managing medical conditions in schools and
- progressive discipline, suspensions and expulsions.

In addition to legal insights, they provide practical advice to school administrators when dealing with the

above matters. While it is important to understand the legal landscape, it is the practical application of the law that is of utmost importance. Roher and Lipinski offer practical guidance on an array of principal duties, including conducting investigations and interviews, note taking and working with police, but the book is ultimately a narrative of the legal landscape in Ontario's education system.

Their wealth of knowledge and experience in law is invaluable, but since both are not educators, the book does not delve into all of the nuanced skills, education-specific knowledge or leadership qualities necessary for navigating the role of the principal. Of course, it would be impossible to fully capture the unique situations that arise when students, staff, parents, superintendents and the broader community are involved. The book nevertheless presents a helpful guide to the laws that affect administrators, and their book would be a valuable reference for all principals and vice-principals. ▲

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When Wellness Works

Five takeaway tips to refocus your pursued goal

I am writing from the perspective of a mom, wife and administrator. When I began my journey as a school leader, I never imagined the journey I would endure and the things I would come to learn about myself and those around me.

While this isn't my whole story, I want to share the strategies that I live by day-to-day, to keep myself well and living in balance.

Two years ago, I was not living at my best and did not have balance.

As administrators, we are so good at serving others and making sure our school is running effectively. But have you ever sat back and really considered your own wellness? Ask yourself these three questions.

1. Do you have a daily routine that includes 15–20 minutes of “me time”?
2. Do you plan regular “date nights” with your significant other or a friend?
3. Do you “unplug” at least once a day?

If you answered no to even one of these questions, or if these questions seem foreign to you, then you need

to take a hard look at your own wellness. When we are not well or living at our best, the other things around us can suffer – our profession, family, personal and professional goals and of course our life vision. I am not saying don't work hard. I am saying that when you learn the proper balance in your work/home life, you are more likely to achieve success in other aspects of your life. When I am taking care of me, everyone around me benefits. I lead with the mentality of being my best self.

Here are five tips from my experience that might work for you.

1. Find time in your day for you, 15–20 minutes. I call this “me time.” You can work out, journal, read, walk, meditate or just sit in your thoughts. It's best if you are completely unplugged during this time.

2. Find something every single day to be grateful for and write it down.
3. Learn to say “no.” If your schedule is full, do not give up your “me time” to fit in something that doesn't serve you.
4. Drink lots of water. Water has many benefits, so get yourself a fun water bottle and drink up.
5. Move your body every day. Your body will thank you because the extra endorphins released will help decrease your stress hormones.

Reflect on your life now and on what it can be. I hope that some of my experience will help you on your own wellness journey. Even doing one thing on this list can help change your perspective in a positive way. ▲

Michelle Sigmann has been a vice-principal in the Durham DSB for 12 years. She and her husband, a shift worker, have two young boys. Her passions are wellness and the coaching model of being able to inspire others to live outside their comfort zone. [@wellnessmichell](https://www.wellnessmichell.com)

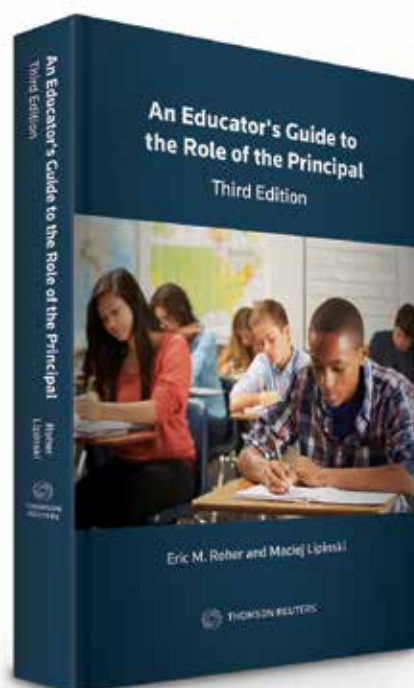
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