

WINTER 2019 VOL. 21 NO. 1

# OPC Register

THE MAGAZINE FOR ONTARIO'S PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS



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Helping students make a successful transition to a new school



Cover Illustration by Julia Breckenreid

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# Continuity and Change

As the landscape changes, so does our work



Throughout this year, I have been visiting many of the districts across the province, touring schools, meeting with senior admin and interacting with principals and vice-principals. I have been framing my remarks around the theme “continuity and change,” taken in light of the fact that the OPC

celebrated its 20th Anniversary in the spring of 2018, making this school year the beginning of the next decade of our organization. As was the case 20 years ago, my term began with a great deal of angst and uncertainty as a new government took office, with a tremendous sense of the fear of the unknown. As an organization borne of the uncertainty of the new management structure that 1998 ushered in, the OPC has thrived on the key roles of Member support, advocacy and professional resource and training development.

Supporting our Members with managing relationships with their employer boards has been an important as-

pect of ours from the beginning. Our PST team, as well as legal counsel, supports Members by offering advice, helping with potential discipline at the board or College of Teachers level or dealing with conflicts with parents or administrative partners. This crucial work will continue moving forward, but the model of support has evolved. Now, a Terms & Conditions District Support model is being used linking one of the PST Consultants to each of the districts, allowing staff to become familiar with and help with the next round of local T & C negotiations.

The development of professional learning resources has been a core

priority of ours since day one and will remain a primary focus moving forward. This service for Members, as well as for aspiring leaders, has also undergone an evolutionary change. Resources must be updated as new legislation is introduced. Delivery models have changed, particularly with the innovation in technology that allows for blended learning, shorter modules and an ability to “learn at a time that suits” through online learning. While we’ll continue to provide resources and PD, what we offer and how we offer it will adapt to the new realities.

Our advocacy work has always been a crucial role of the organization. We continue to speak on behalf of our Members, using the lens of student success, to advocate for their needs within the education system. At the start of this school year, two letters were sent to the Minister regarding the Health and Physical Education curriculum. At a subsequent meeting with the Minister, we shared our concerns not only about the HPE curriculum, but about student health and well-being. During our annual Queen’s Park Day, we continued to advocate for student health and well-being, seeking a reduction in duplication of forms, as well as an end to seniority-based hiring. This emphasis on student well-being will ensure that principals and vice-principals can focus on the key work of leading the learning agenda to realize the success of all students.

In my travels throughout the province, I have seen so many examples of outstanding leadership, clearly reflecting the OPC dedication to “exemplary leadership in public education.” Thank you to all of you who give so much of yourselves every day to ensure the success of our students and help to make Ontario a beacon of hope, equity and inclusion on the international stage. It is true that “we do it for the kids.” ▲



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# Happenings at OPC ...



After 20 years working with the OPC, Dr. Joanne Robinson retired. She has been an integral part of the evolution of our organization and the leader of our professional learning team.



The International School Leadership (ISL) held workshop sessions and study tours with education leaders from Australia, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden (above) and the United Kingdom (below).



In 2018, the OPC established the Difference Makers program. Six OPC Members were inducted from Simcoe County, Lakehead, Ontario North East, Waterloo, Greater Essex County and York Region District School Boards.



# Podcasts

Another way to learn, communicate and entertain

Podcasts are an episodic series of audio files that are available to download or listen to at your convenience. They

are similar to the radio, but are pre-recorded instead of being live. Podcasts are the new wave in media and are quickly growing in popularity, since they are easy to create and digest. Conveniently, they are as portable as your smartphone music library and can be listened to while driving, grocery shopping, exercising or relaxing.

Podcasts are a great way to get your news and other useful information while on the go. They can be found on the Google Play app (for Android phones), the Apple Podcast app (for iPhones), Spotify (any smartphone or computer) or YouTube. Simply download any one of those apps on your phone or tablet, then open the app and search for what you might be interested in. You can press play to listen, or download to save for later. Anything can be found on a podcast – murder mysteries, education tools, the news, sports commentary, music reviews and more.

Podcasts are particularly useful for educators because theirs is a demanding job with little downtime. They are perfect for multitasking!

Here are five podcasts that are useful for educators in their everyday lives.

#### 1. CBC Radio

CBC has a collection of podcasts that span from their news reports to murder mysteries. There is something for everyone, and they are a reliable news source as well as interesting to follow.

#### 2. TED Talks Education

This is a podcast where the professional community of teachers, psychologists and education reformers speak on important topics such as teacher-student connections, IQ, and rethinking school systems.

#### 3. Ten Minute Teacher

Ten Minute Teacher has five episodes a week, each with a different theme. For example, Motivational Mondays and Wonderful Classroom Wednesdays. It is relatable

and interesting because each episode has a short interview with a different teacher.

#### 4. Truth for Teachers

This is more about the educator than the student. It is about mindset, productivity and happiness for the teacher (and in this case, principals). It can help you with strategies to balance your workload, finding and remaining motivated, and dealing with pressure.

#### 5. Grownups Read Things

##### They Wrote as Kids

Technically this one is not related to education, but it is cute and cathartic. These episodes are recorded live on a stage, and adults genuinely share things they wrote when they were kids. It is great to listen to when you are having a bad day, or just need a light pick-me-up.

The Ontario Principals' Council also has a podcast called The Principals' Voice that is available on our website, principals.ca. We welcome interview ideas for future episodes. ▲

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**LISA**  
**THOMPSON**

## Bringing her rural roots to education

By Peggy Sweeney

Lisa Thompson was born in Wingham, Ontario, a small community in Huron County. She studied at the University of Guelph, earning a degree in public administration and consumer economics. After graduation, she worked as the General Manager of the Ontario Dairy Goat Cooperative (ODGC).

At the co-op, she successfully negotiated the amalgamation of two organizations, allowing the ODGC to evolve from a regional operation into a provincial cooperative, headquartered in Teeswater, also in Bruce County. During her six years with the co-op, Thompson worked to improve the relationship between producers and processors, and turned it into a multi-million dollar business venture.

She then worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs as a community development specialist. It was in this role where she first started working with educators. Part of her job was to coordinate and facilitate summer institutes for teachers who were interested in teaching about agri-food science in their classrooms.

In addition to the ministry, she was also the Vice Chair for Ontario Agri Food Education, where she worked to second teachers to develop curriculum on behalf of commodity organizations. This ensured all the materials were teacher friendly and supplemented curriculum could be used.

Thompson has been involved with many community and agricultural organizations. She has served as an Ontario 4-H Foundation Trustee, Ontario 4-H Foundation Chair of the Board, Chair of the International Goat Symposium and Vice-Chair of Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc.

She now resides in Teeswater with her husband Dennis. With grown children and grandchildren, she enjoys spending time working on the family farm, skiing and curling.

In 2011, Thompson moved away from agriculture. She was elected as the Progressive Conservative MPP for Huron-Bruce, re-elected in 2014 and 2018. While in Opposition, she served as the party's critic for Environment and Climate Change, Energy, Small Business, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and International Trade. In January 2018, she was chosen as the party's caucus chair.

Three weeks after the 2018 provincial election, Thompson found herself in the governing party for the first time, and was asked by Premier-Designate Doug Ford to be Minister of Education.

"I was absolutely honoured and energized by the opportunity, because it was a chance to continue having a positive impact on the education system based on my previous work. I felt very comfortable, partly because I have teachers in my immediately family, and a number of extended family and

friends who are teachers as well. And I knew that we needed to support our principals and our teachers because the manner in which they have to teach today deserves so much respect."

What the role of today's principal should look like continues to be a conversation in our sector. Should it be instructional leader or manager? The Minister has some thoughts. "I do have some administrators in my family so this is an interesting one for me. First and foremost, I see them leading by example. I see them having a leadership role and ensuring that the team in their schools is functioning to the best of its ability, with the resources to ensure that the learning environment in the classroom is the best it can be.

"And yes, in terms of administration, I do believe in a leadership role. There is some responsibility towards making sure that the school is open and running and busses are bringing their students to school on time. Great leaders can manage many things. I really think it's important that over and above the day-to-day routine of running the school, they need to have an opportunity to let their leadership shine, and support teachers in the classroom as well as set the climate, set the tone."

In late August 2018, the government announced that an extensive education consultation review would be undertaken. Ontarians were encouraged to provide feedback on the education system, with a particular focus on improving student performance in STEM; preparing students with needed job skills, such as skilled trades and coding; improving provincial standardized testing; ensuring students graduate with important life skills, including financial literacy; managing the use of technology in classrooms; building a new age-appropriate Health and Physical Education curriculum; and developing a Parents' Bill of Rights. The goal of the consultations was to prepare Ontario students for success, improve their academic achievement and equip them with the tools needed to enter the working world.

The consultation closed on December 15, 2018. Throughout the process, the ministry reviewed the data that came through email submissions, telephone town halls and an online survey. "We've been very fluid in our commitment to making sure that we're recognizing themes and trends, and working to make sure that at the conclusion of the consultation we are in a position immediately in the new year to start moving forward in terms of evolving and developing an age appropriate health and physical education curriculum. That's our first priority because we will be testing it later in the spring, ready for roll out September 2019."

The issue of a revised Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum was also raised at the Ontario Progressive Conservative policy conference in November 2018. Tanya Granic Allen, one of the provincial P.C. leadership contenders in the March 2018 race, put forward a resolution calling gender identity a liberal ideology and asking that references to it be deleted from the HPE curriculum. A majority of delegates at the convention voted in support of the resolution.

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**“... the number one issue is making sure that graduating students have resiliency and the skills that allow them to pursue the jobs and careers of today and tomorrow.”**

The resolution received widespread criticism outside of the P.C. party. People expressed concern about the intention and reasoning behind it, saying that it reflected a position that the governing party should not support. Premier Doug Ford then stressed that the resolution was not binding and that his government would not be moving forward with it. Minister Thompson also stated publicly and in the Legislature that the resolution “has nothing at all to do with government policy.”

Beyond that issue, Thompson felt the public consultation process was a success. “I was amazed at the willingness of people to participate. When we hosted the town halls we had doctors, teachers, parents and engaged community members all offering such remarkable perspectives on how we can evolve education so that we’re meeting the needs of teachers and students to ensure a great learning environment, and making sure that we are bringing to the classroom learning opportunities that will best support our students to get good, quality careers when they graduate.”

While the consultation process had not yet ended when this interview took place, the Minister did have some early thoughts about her priorities for the ministry.

“Being in the role for five short months, it is very, very clear that the number one issue is making sure that graduating students have resiliency and the skills that allow them to pursue the jobs and careers of today and tomorrow. From students I have met with, through to corporate Ontario, there is a common recognition that students are not graduating with the competencies and skills expected by employers today. And it all starts with math.

“I spoke to a group of university students just last week, and they concur. They did not have the math skills required upon graduation. Employers aren’t just looking for students who can count change back at the sales counter. They are also looking for students who have a sense of confidence that they can go in and tackle a job. So, we have some work to do to make sure that the curriculum that is used in the classroom is focusing on the skills required such as math competency, financial literacy and also building confidence and resiliency so that students know they can get out there and have a bright future.”

While still relatively new to the role, the Minister does have a message for principals and vice-princi-

pals who have yet to meet her and may only know her from media stories. “I want to put every effort into ensuring that we have the best learning environment, not only for our students but for our educators as well. As I’ve said before, I’ve got a lot of coaching from family, friends and people who care about the education system. And given my previous background early on in my career working to support teachers in the classroom, I’ve always admired people who step forward to make a difference in young people’s lives.

“And I am absolutely confident in the educators that we have. We have some of the best teachers and administrators worldwide, and I want to continue to ensure that the proper respect is generated for them. I also want to ensure that we are well positioned to continue to lead around the world in how we support our students moving forward into very successful careers, be it trades or whatever their calling may be.”

While the learning curve is still relatively steep, Thompson is eager to learn as much about the ministry and its issues as possible so she can advocate for all of Ontario’s students. ▲

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# Problem-Based Learning

A whole school culture and mindset that benefits students

The dozens of visitors to Groh Public School in the Waterloo Region DSB over the past few months have been left with a sense of awe and confirmation that our public education system is in good hands.

Groh is a new JK – 8 school that is designed and equipped on the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model. It opened in the fall of 2017 under the leadership of principal Helmut Tinnes. It is a concept that is grounded in research and is transferable to any school setting. PBL is a whole school culture and mindset that goes well beyond the bricks and mortar and desks.

The focus of the curriculum is on six global competencies, and student learning expectations are covered through the competencies. Each class identifies the driving question(s) that is authentically identified and part of the students' "real world." In one of my visits to the school, I asked one of the teachers where the Ontario curriculum expectations fit into this style of teaching and she responded with an emphatic "everywhere." She explained that she uses the curriculum guideline every day and knew it intimately because it drove her ongoing formative assessment practice and confirmed the direction of the inquiry.

The discussions I had with students verified this phenomenon. They knew exactly what they were learning and what they needed to do to move forward. The concept of collaborative inquiry thrives in every classroom and is modelled by teams of teachers. Identifi-



fied students are totally engaged and offer meaningful contributions to the conversations.

When things do not go as planned, the question is focused on "what did we learn?" If you have ever wondered whether student motivation was a factor in the disciplinary climate of a school or classroom, there is evidence at Groh that it definitely is.

Reviewing the concept to date, Helmut notes that, "What we have discovered, and what I have always believed, is that when we permit the students to drive the learning, all students will succeed. From an equity perspective, all students, regardless of their abilities or challenges, have an opportunity to engage in learning that is of interest to them. We teach the students what they want to learn, not what the teacher wants to teach."

Leadership is not limited to the position called principal or vice-prin-

icipal. It flourishes everywhere in the school and community. The staff have chosen to be part of the vision and work as a team. The culture of coaching among the adults in the building helps both new and experienced staff, support staff and teachers, and volunteers feel ownership for the students and their learning. Everyone honours the professionalism that is intrinsic to the school as leadership is dynamic with a focus on kids.

The book *The Power of Inquiry: Teaching and learning with curiosity, creativity and purpose in the contemporary classroom* by Kath Murdoch is a great synopsis of the rationale and the strategies associated with PBL. Any school interested in going this direction would find it invaluable. ▲

Joanne Robinson

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**THE**

**#MeToo**

**MOVEMENT**

## School leaders need to understand and respond to any allegations

Sexual harassment and even sexual violence have been normalized in our society in many ways. The often subtle and discrete manner in which primarily men use sex and gender to discriminate, demean and manipulate primarily women has largely gone unquestioned in the past. #MeToo has been instrumental in calling out these behaviours and the individuals and groups that participate in and facilitate them. As principals and vice-principals, it is important to understand #MeToo and what it means for your roles as school leaders. Allegations of sexual harassment can be initiated by staff, students or members of the broader school community and they can have far-reaching effects on the individuals involved and the overall environment.

The concept of “Me Too” has existed for many years as a unifying message for those who have experienced sexual harassment. It gained significant momentum, however, in 2017 when #MeToo was widely used on social media platforms to illustrate just how pervasive sexual harassment is in the lives of women (Jackson, 2018). The #MeToo movement seeks to draw attention to the issue of sexual harassment and violence that is experienced mainly by women but ultimately by those of all genders.

By the OPC Protective Services Team



#MeToo

is a powerful tool to  
**EMPOWER** and  
**SUPPORT** victims  
and to encourage a  
shift in our collective  
thinking regarding  
inappropriate  
behaviours.

The stories told within the #MeToo movement depict a range of behaviours that can vary in their definition and seriousness, including:

- Sex-based harassment: Behaviour that derogates, demeans or humiliates an individual based on that individual's gender
- Gender harassment: Behaviour not aimed at sexual cooperation but that conveys insulting, hostile and degrading attitudes about women
- Unwanted sexual attention: Expressions of romantic or sexual interest that are unwelcome, unreciprocated and offensive to the recipient
- Sexual coercion: Bribes or threats that make conditions contingent on sexual cooperation (Leskinen, Cortina & Kabat, 2011)
- Sexual assault: Unwanted sexual activity or touching (*Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014, 2017*).

Over a third of Canadian women have experienced sexual harassment at work and seven in 10 women have faced gender-based discrimination. Two-thirds of women have a friend who has been sexually harassed (Human Resources Professionals Association, 2018) and fewer than two in 10 women feel completely safe in public spaces (National Post, 2018). Between 85 and 95 per cent of women don't report incidents of sexual harassment (Jackson, 2018).

In 2016, 27,107 violent sexual offences were reported to police in Canada (*Victims of police-reported violent crime in Canada, 2016, 2018*). These were just the reported offences. There were 636,000 incidents of sexual assault in Canada in 2014 (*Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014, 2017*).

It is clear that sexual harassment and violence are significantly under-reported. There are many reasons for this, including the shame and guilt that victims feel and the acceptance of these behaviours as "normal." For many, sexual harassment and violence are an established part of everyday life. This is especially so for Aboriginal people, who experience sexual assault at a rate three times higher than non-Aboriginal people (*Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014, 2017*).

Sexual harassment and violence can have devastating effects on victims' emotional and mental health, leading to depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These can manifest in physical ways as well, with sleep disturbances, pain, increased risk of cardiovascular disease and increased risk of suicide. In the context of the workplace, sexual harassment can destroy a person's economic and career well-being (Jackson, 2018). Victims of gender harassment report lower psychological well-being, more physical health problems and symptoms of traumatic stress (Leskinen et al. 2011).

Part of the problem is that many of these behaviours do not meet the legal definition of sexual harassment (Human Resources Professionals Association, 2018). Objectification, sexual harassment and abuse are normalized as part of everyday life. Harassment in the form of unwanted sexual attention is often framed as compliments, sexual desire, romance and flirtation (Hlavka, 2014). Given the serious consequences of sexual harassment and violence, it is troubling that these behaviours continue to be normalized. Girls are taught from a very young age to simply tolerate aggressive behaviour from men (Hlavka, 2014).

These underlying cultural norms are not easily captured by law and policy reforms. #MeToo is a powerful tool to empower and support victims and to encourage a shift in our collective thinking regarding inappropriate behaviours. In telling their stories, women are drawing attention to the inequality that has been normalized and accepted (Hlavka, 2014).

In an online poll of women aged 14 to 24, the majority said the #MeToo movement had made them hopeful about gender equality in the future. To them, #MeToo means support for victims of sexual harassment and awareness to end such bullying (National Post, 2018).

### How to Foster a Harassment-Free Environment

As leaders within their schools, principals and vice-principals play an important role in fostering a positive environment for students and staff. Question gender stereotypes and cultivate a safe space. Be responsible for your own behaviours, but also ensure the conduct and practices of the school community are respectful and comply with the law and policies. Always maintain professional boundaries with staff, students and the broader school community.

It is also important to foster an environment that encourages victims to come forward (Preston, 2018). Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, school boards are required to have workplace violence and harassment policies in place. The *Education Act* has clear guidelines regarding bullying and sexual assault. Principals and vice-principals should be familiar with the laws and board policies and protocols regarding these types of behaviours.

### What to Do if You're Made Aware of Sexual Harassment

You may be made aware of sexual harassment or of questionable behaviour related to gender or sexuality and it is important to respond appropriately. This will depend on whether there are students, staff or both involved in the alleged incident. In all cases, be supportive of both the complainant and the accused and try to keep the climate as calm as possible. Inform your Supervisory Officer of the situation.

Under the *Education Act*, a principal must suspend a student if they believe the student has engaged in sexual assault or bullying or other prohibited behaviours that are motivated by bias, prejudice or hate, based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (1990). You must report to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) if a child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited or there is a risk a child will be (*Child and Family Services Act*, 1990).

Your board will also have a policy regarding police reporting. Sexual assaults, relationship-based violence, hate- and bias-motivated incidents and non-consensual sharing of intimate images must all be reported to police. In other cases, use your discretion and consult with your SO to determine whether police should be contacted (Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol, 2015). In all cases, work with your SO to ensure students are supported. These supports can include social workers, guidance counsellors, psychologists and other school and community professionals.

In the context of staff, the board must investigate allegations of harassment, including sexual harassment. Work with your Supervisory Officer and

Human Resources to determine the appropriate action to take, and maintain confidentiality throughout. Remind all parties that they have access to an employee assistance program (EAP).

These incidents can represent important learning opportunities that can lead to a better understanding of acceptable behaviour in the workplace and they can be a way to facilitate dialogue (Preston, 2018). It can be an opportunity for an accused to be made aware of their inappropriate behaviours and to make change (Tatelman, 2018).

### What to Do if You're the Subject of a Sexual Harassment Complaint

During this time of change and uncertainty that #MeToo has fostered, it is possible that a principal or vice-principal will be the subject of a sexual harassment complaint. If you find yourself in this situation, you will likely be assigned to home pending an investigation. While this experience can feel very isolating and stressful, it is a normal part of the process. Contact the OPC Protective Services for support and guidance and take advantage of your EAP and any other supports available to you. Cooperate with your board's investigation with the support of an OPC Protective Services Consultant and avoid talking to other school board employees about the allegations or the investigation. It is important to be open to working with the board to ensure a fair process is followed and a positive outcome is achieved.

Given the nature of #MeToo, allegations of sexual harassment may become public. This can certainly have detrimental effects on the accused and often they will want to retaliate with assertions of defamation, slander or libel. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right in Canada and this can make it difficult to successfully advance a defamation claim in these cases.

A true statement or a fair comment will not be defamation. It is also possible that the behaviour of a principal or vice-principal will fall within Ontario's anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) legislation. These are used by individuals or organizations as an attempt to silence public criticism by

**BE RESPONSIBLE**  
for your own  
behaviours, but  
also ensure the  
conduct and practices  
of the school community  
are **RESPECTFUL**  
**AND COMPLY WITH**  
**THE LAW AND**  
**POLICIES.**

claiming defamation. The legislation seeks to prevent these lawsuits by prohibiting them in matters that are of public importance. It is relatively new legislation, so it is unclear how it might apply in these circumstances, but it is possible that a defamation lawsuit would be prohibited if it relates to the behaviour of a school leader. Even when successful, defamation lawsuits are rarely advantageous, as they provide a public space for the complainant

#MeToo

is **OPENING OUR EYES**  
to inappropriate conduct that has  
had harmful and lasting effects on  
individuals and our society overall.

to repeat their defamatory statements in open court. Of course, where a complainant's conduct is particularly malicious, their statements are clearly false, and the damage they cause quite serious, it may be necessary to commence litigation.

#MeToo has served an important function in the discussion of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It has shed light on the prevalence of these behaviours in our culture. For some, it can feel like an alarming shift with uncertain outcomes, but #MeToo is opening our eyes to inappropriate conduct that has had harmful and lasting effects on individuals and our society overall. It is empowering women to come forward with their stories,

so that we may all reflect, learn and create positive change in our own lives and communities. ▲

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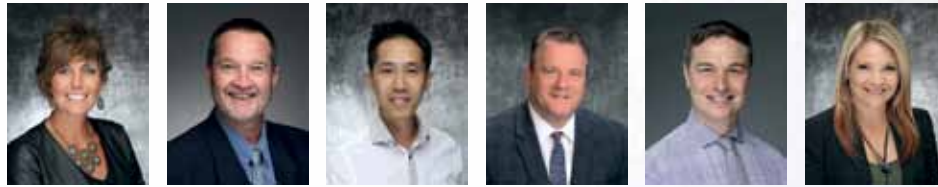


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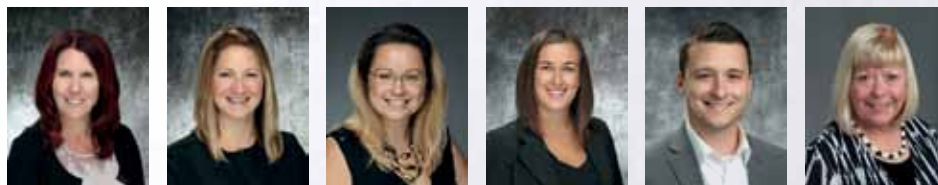
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## Navigating the Role

### What type of instructional leader are you?

By Georgia M. Powell

In Ontario, many principals and vice-principals rarely ask themselves what type of instructional leader they are, not because they are not reflective, but mostly because they didn't think there was a type and they never really thought there was an option; all principals are instructional leaders after all.

#### THE BACKGROUND

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Having taught for more than 12 years in three different countries, I became fascinated with 'how' principals regard instruction. Logically, principals as school leaders would naturally assume the role as lead teachers, or instructional leaders. The thoughts and connections made sense, but the experiences did not collaborate such sequence. The interest in the phenomenon of instructional leadership (IL) and what principals do became the basis of a doctoral dissertation.

#### THE WORK

---

The focus of my work was to find out how elementary principals understand instructional leadership and how they

navigate the role within their schools. The discussion on IL is not new to the teaching and learning platform as it has been worked and reworked, explained and unexplained and many facets added and removed. With the growing misunderstanding of IL, it was important to uncover the opinions of elementary principals in the Ontario context.

Early research on the topic outlines a set of actions undertaken by principals, classifying them as indicators of instructional leadership. With the change in era and added research, IL was becoming harder to define, making it more difficult for leaders to identify their role and, therefore, their expectations. The questions of role versus work became more political, especially with the addition of school success.

In their 2015 study, Pollock and Hauseman found that the role of principals in Ontario had changed so much, to include

## Many researchers reported findings that support specific concepts like capacity building and professional development as key ideas in instructional leadership work.

many aspects of work that take away from instruction. The study also found that principals wanted to do the work of instructional leaders, but they did not have the time. The results indicated that while principals had more to do now than years ago, leading the instruction was being left behind. This thought forced the practical question of how principals understand their role as instructional leaders.

Before designing and carrying out a plan to collect such data, examination of the literature was informational. It was fascinating to see the evolution of IL, considered a phenomenon because of its lack in clarity and its evasive nature. Many researchers reported findings that support specific concepts like capacity building and professional development as key ideas in instructional leadership work. While the ideas were similar, the differences in documented thoughts and actions were nagging. Synthesizing the literature produced four main components under which IL was examined: mission and vision, management, positive environment and staffing and resources. These components made it easier to examine the approach to IL work.

The literature also brought to light the overwhelming variety of how instructional leadership is understood and so actioned. The two main views included IL as a typology or as an agent of change (seen in Fig.1). These two views were deduced after extensive searching within existing literature. What does this then mean?

As a typology, findings indicate that IL is a leadership style. Leithwood (2014), in many of his works, classifies and compares instructional leadership with many other common constructs of leadership styles including transformational, distributive and inclusive. Researchers such as Ryan, (2010) have extensive work on types of effective leadership.

Instructional leadership was classified as one way in which school leaders garner student success. The idea was it works with other leadership styles similar to the notion of how people lead, and there is not only one way. As an agent of change, IL included specific tasks that are needed for students to succeed. So whatever principals decided was important for their buildings and deemed necessary for student learning, that task was considered IL. Interestingly, the components

FIG. 1

### THE VIEWS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

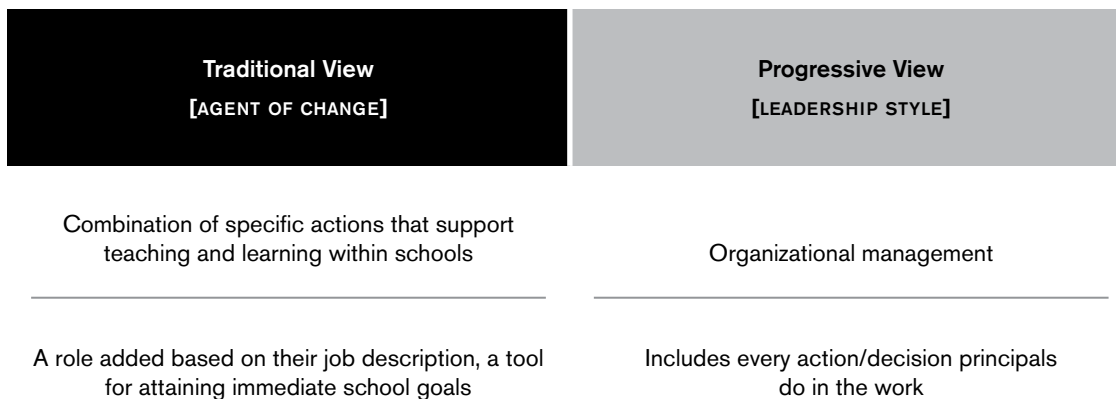






FIG. 2

## INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP VIEWS Breakdown

	UNDERSTANDING 	STRATEGIES 	SUPPORT 	CHALLENGES 
Traditional	Tasks checklist	Immediate goals	As needed	Isolation
Progressive	All interactions	Strategic actions; big picture	Foundational	Attitude

of both views were similar; the difference was in thoughts that led to varied actions.

### THE PROCESS

The 2017 study by Powell followed 12 elementary principals from various school boards in Ontario. The sample set included males and females with leadership experiences ranging from three to 18 years. These school leaders shared their lived experiences as instructional leaders. The principals participated by phone as well as in face-to-face interviews guided by a series of questions examining their understand-

... elementary principals in Ontario think IL is an essential part of what they do as school leaders.

ing of IL, the strategies they employ, the supports used as well as the challenges they face while doing the work. Like any research, the information was recorded, transcribed and further analyzed to document their story. Proper privacy protocols and ethical considerations were closely followed to ensure the authenticity of the collected stories.

### THE RESULTS

The themes that emerged from the experiences of the principals supported much of what is in the literature. The findings of the study showed that elementary principals in Ontario think IL is an essential part of what they do as school leaders. It was also very clear that the use of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) was the basis of much of what they explained. They believe that having a shared vision and mission is foundational to the building of the teaching and learning within school, which includes all stakeholders.

The participants also believed there are specific skills sets and characteristics that leaders should possess in order to do the work of IL. Skills related to modeling, facilitation and strategic decision making were among those most identified. Principals in the study had varying understanding of IL, which greatly impacted their idea of what the work involves. The definitions shared were influenced by their previous experiences as teachers, curriculum coaches or vice-principals. The variety in meaning also supported whether participants saw instructional leadership as a typology or as actions to bring about learning change.

Regardless of their thoughts about the meaning of instructional leadership, principals in the study had similar strategies that they used for the work. The strategies commonly referenced included relationship building, professional development and professional learning, building capacity, strategic staffing and

maintaining a positive school culture. The principals shared many stories of how they used aspects of the listed items to enhance the teaching and learning within their schools.

The conversations varied in the emphasis that each principal placed on each strategy, depending on their thoughts about what their role is as an instructional leader. For example, one principal who saw IL as a leadership style, a typology, used capacity building techniques to address big ideas, while another principal who viewed IL as agent of change used capacity building to focus on achievement for math goals for a quarter. Each strategy was applied based on principals' thoughts of their role as instructional leader. The biggest piece was the emphasis on relationship building as a strategy for their role as instructional leaders; many participants felt it was the sole foundation of anything they wanted to accomplish within schools.

Similarly, principals had supports in place that assisted with the work they do as instructional leaders. Common responses included use of frameworks/plans, established collaborative teams, use of experts and data, community partnerships as well as guidance and feedback from supervisors, colleagues and peers. The principals' thoughts affected their actions. In addition, the challenges to the work included time, budget and staff behaviours as common threads. While the stories had unique aspects in the application to specific schools, the underlying similarities showed that IL is still a phenomenon requiring further understanding.

The most significant findings outlined that principals' thoughts were either linked to IL as a leadership style, which was classified as a 'progressive view' in this study, or as agents of change, which is a more 'traditional view' to the work. Viewing IL traditionally meant that there is a combination of specific actions that will support the learning within schools. The traditional view sees IL as an added role to the job description of a principal, a tool that is used to address learning needs; for example, having a checklist or a set of tasks that will assist with the teaching and learning of the school.

Adversely, viewing IL as a leadership style is classified as having a progressive view. Horng and Loeb in their 2010 paper talked about approaching IL with a more organizational lens, organizational management making the idea of a progressive view a more holistic way to understanding IL. The principals in the study with more years of experience were the ones who said that everything they do on a daily basis is part of what they do as instructional leaders. In effect, every decision they make in schools, from building choices to curriculum direction, is part of what they do as instructional leaders.

The study found that elementary principals practiced IL with a traditional or progressive view. The choice is personal as well as experiential. Those who have been principals for a longer time clearly stated that time was a contributing factor to what they now believe. The progressive view, viewing IL as a leadership style, incorporates IL in all interactions within the role of the school leader, and the strategies are more 'big picture' and have strategic actions. The supports are foundational and ongoing, and the challenges are seen more as attitude and approach, rather than barriers.

Conversely, a traditional view, agent of change, understands IL as a set of tasks needed to address teaching and learning goals with strategies focused on reaching immediate goals. The supports are usually on an as needed basis, rather than foundational, and often challenges create isolation (seen in Fig. 2). Regardless of view, the IL practices were clearly aligned to the OLF and its domains. Principals, especially those with fewer than eight years of practice, depended heavily on the document for guidance in what they are expected to do as instructional leaders.

## THE PRACTICE

So why is this relevant and how can it help practising principals? What does all of this mean? The notion of reflective practice is not a new concept, but it can become an overlooked action. All principals consider themselves involved in the instructional process because after all, that is the business of schools – teaching and learning.

However, the 'how' is what is often hazy; principals do what they know and keep doing it because that is how they understand it. This study encourages principals to think about how they understand IL and how it will influence their practice. There is no wrong or right way with either a progressive or traditional view to IL, but it does dictate 'how' the work is done.

When we look at the OLF carefully, it supports the content of an IL framework rather than a 'general' leadership framework. This observation was a reflective thought because principals in the study relied heavily on the document to outline what they do as instructional leaders. When using a progressive view to IL, what other leadership styles are principals using to lead schools? These questions force reflective practices.

This study encourages principals to think about their understanding of this phenomenon so they can actualize their actions in schools. It encourages policy makers to consider discussions around the understanding of IL as well as view

There are specific **skills sets and characteristics** that leaders should possess in order to do the work of **IL**.

The strategies commonly referenced included relationship building, professional development and professional learning, building capacity, strategic staffing and maintaining a positive school culture.

the contents of the OLF as more of an instructional leadership framework, rather than a complete leadership framework. Or

should the province look into creating an IL framework so principals can find themselves on a continuum with a clearer sense of its meaning or a common understanding?

As a principal, reflecting on your practice is essential for growth and efficiency as a leader. Asking the question, am I a traditional or a progressive practitioner when it comes to IL, is the beginning of fully understanding the role. If you can answer this question, then you will be able to change as you see fit or as your school needs evolve. ▲

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# Starling MINDS



**S**tarling Minds is a confidential, online mental health and wellness program that is tailored specifically for Canadian principals, vice-principals and teachers. It helps you assess, monitor and improve your mental fitness using educational videos and evidence-based strategies backed by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The OPC has partnered with Starling Minds to provide this service free of charge to Members and their families.

Mental illness is now affecting more people than ever. At Starling Minds, we monitor mental health news across Canada and have yet to find a statistic that indicates that mental health is improving. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 1 in 5 Canadians will experience mental illness in any given year<sup>1</sup>. Last year, Statistics Canada found that over the course of a lifetime, 1 in 3 will have struggled with mental illness or substance abuse<sup>2</sup>. Other surveys indicate that one in two will have experienced a mental illness by the time they reach age 40<sup>3</sup>.

With mental health trends pointing downwards, many are left wondering why and if it will get better.

A new resource  
to support your  
mental health and  
wellness

By Dr. Andrew Miki

Illustration by  
Julia Breckenreid



### Why is Mental Health on the Decline?

The World Health Organization (WHO) cites stress as the global health epidemic of the 21st century. When left unchecked, stress wreaks havoc on our mental health. While stressful situations arise from all areas of life – finances relationships, family and work to name a few – studies indicate that work stress is becoming the primary cause of mental health concerns<sup>4</sup>.

The “overwhelmed employee” was a term first coined by Deloitte researchers back in 2012. Six years later it’s still a widespread concern. In their 2018 Human Capital trends report, Deloitte researchers provide insight into why mental health is still an issue that needs to be addressed.

*“While the issue of highly stressed workers is not new, the relentless pace of business today has made the problem worse. Driven by the*

*always-on nature of the digital business and 24/7 working styles, studies now show that more than 40 per cent of all workers face high stress in their jobs, negatively affecting their productivity, health and family stability.”<sup>5</sup>*

In this same report, the think-tank points to the percentage of organizations that are taking employee well-being seriously. According to their survey, 60 per cent of organizational leaders believe that offering mental health support is integral in a holistic well-being plan, yet only 21 per cent actually provide it. As a Member of the Ontario Principals’ Council, you’re part of a professional association that values your mental health and well-being. Starling Minds, an online, evidence-based mental health support and education program designed specifically for teachers,

vice-principals and principals, is now available for you and your family members.

### Why Starling Minds?

The OPC recently received feedback from Members who indicated that mental health and wellness professional resources would be warmly welcomed. In fact, after surveying Members, the OPC found that 36 per cent of Members rarely achieve work-life balance. Committed to supporting principals and vice-principals with programs and tools that improve overall mental health, Starling is here so you can build skills that will make it easier to live your professional and personal lives to the fullest.

### What is Starling Minds and How Will it Help Me?

Starling Minds first became available for teachers, principals and vice-principals in 2013.



Over the past 10 years, I've cared for nearly 200 educators and have helped them improve their mental health using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Given my success rates with one-to-one therapy, I was asked to facilitate group therapy sessions for a provincial teachers' federation to reach more educators.

Group therapy proved to be equally successful with an added benefit of helping educators recognize that they were not alone in their struggles. To take the program one step further, I saw an opportunity to bring CBT education online to help more people in the privacy of their homes. Stigma is the primary reason why 49 per cent of all mental illness is left untreated<sup>6</sup>. By delivering confidential online CBT education, educators from across Canada could effectively build greater mental resilience and learn to lead more balanced lives.

Today, Starling's community has grown to support thousands of teachers, principals and vice-principals across Canada who are actively working on their mental health every day, including the CPCO and ADFO. Using interactive exercises, tools and video-based sessions, our CBT program will help enhance your coping skills to better manage stress, anxiety and depression. Here's some recent feedback we received from an Ontario-based principal:

*"Starling is wonderful! I tried to join a therapy group this week and it just wasn't for me. This has been just what I needed. I love how tangible and action based everything is. I also love the informative videos and comments. A 5/5 rating for me."*

We care deeply about efficacy at Starling and are always looking for ways to make our programs more effective. To do so, we've tracked anonymized symptom scores from over 6,000 Starling Members since 2013. I'm pleased to report that 77 per cent of Starling

members move up the mental health continuum by decreasing symptoms of anxiety, sadness and worry. Those with improved symptom scores report being more productive, more engaged and happier at work.

#### Our Approach to Mental Health

We believe that everyone has mental health that needs to be looked after, just like our physical health. This concept is referred to as Mental Fitness. I'm not referring to memory games or thinking puzzles, but rather exercises that keep you mentally well and help build up your resilience to stress. Just as it's easy to opt for the couch rather than exercise, it's also easy to feed negative thought and behaviour patterns that evoke feelings of sadness, worry and anxiety.

We're more likely to get sick when we don't exercise or nourish our bodies with proper nutrition. Similarly, when we don't practice healthy cognitive practices, mental illness is more likely to develop. Depending on the stressors you have in your life and how much energy you have in your battery, you'll fall somewhere on the mental health continuum between healthy and unhealthy. When your battery is depleted and you are experiencing an increase in external stressors, you are at greater risk of becoming mentally unwell. Your genetics also play a role in how much stress you can handle.

It is a well-known scientific fact that genes play a prominent role in an individual's ability to cope with stress<sup>7</sup>. Our genetic makeup predisposes us to certain stress thresholds that vary greatly from one person to another. We know that for those with lower tolerance levels, stressful environments elicit higher physiological responses that are closely linked to greater susceptibility to depression, anxiety and traumatic stress disorders. Despite your genetic make-up, we all have the ability to become more resilient to stress and mentally fit.



60%

of organizational leaders believe that offering **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT** is integral in a holistic well-being plan, yet only **21%** actually provide it.

---

**STIGMA** is the primary reason why

49%

of all mental illness is left **UNTREATED.**



**77%**  
of  
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MEMBERS**  
move up the  
**MENTAL HEALTH  
CONTINUUM**  
by decreasing  
symptoms of anxiety,  
sadness and worry.

### Becoming More Mentally Fit

Mental fitness uses cognitive-behavioural techniques that strengthen the neural pathways that lead to the most realistic and objective thoughts. It's about breaking patterns so that you experience positive emotions more regularly than negative ones. If you've been viewing life events through a glass half empty lens, mental fitness can help.

The more we feed negative thoughts and behaviours, the more likely they will occur. This is due to the neuroplasticity of our brains. Science has proven that humans have an enormous capacity to constantly rewire our brains throughout our lives. Thoughts that evoke certain emotions cluster together via neural pathways, meaning that every time we allow a negative thought to repeat, it strengthens. Mental Fitness seeks to strengthen neural networks that make you feel mentally healthy.

By improving your mental fitness you'll feel more confident, resilient and energized. It's natural to feel sadness and worry but by strengthening your mental fitness, it will become more difficult for sadness to progress to depression and worry to spiral into anxiety.

### What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and How Does it Work?

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy is a scientifically-based treatment that helps people learn how their thoughts, behaviours and physiology affect how they feel<sup>8</sup>. It views mental health management as a skill that can be learned and improved. Learning techniques that improve your mental fitness with CBT can be broken down into three skills that work in tandem with one another:

1. Recognizing the patterns that create difficult emotions and negative moods
2. Integrating techniques to regulate over-

whelming emotions and thoughts as and when they arise

3. Resolving the patterns that detract from your well-being by building new ones.

Part of strengthening your mental fitness is discovering strategies that are most effective for you. Similar to how some people prefer to play outdoor team sports vs. going to the gym, you'll discover methods that work better for you.

### Support for Aspiring Leaders

Starling will help to better prepare aspiring leaders for a leadership role by strengthening their mental resilience to stress and burnout. In Starling's mental health Toolbox, there is also a Goal Setter tool to help set SMART goals. By using it frequently, you'll be able to track progress over time in the Goal History application and build confidence.

### Support for OPC Members Who Want to Improve their Overall Wellness

If you are looking for strategies to build your overall wellness, Starling can help. No matter where you are sitting on the mental health continuum, there is always room to become even more resilient and self-aware. Whether you're looking to become more effective at work, more present at home or simply improve your overall work-life balance, Starling is here for you. You may find the Goal Setter tool to be particularly effective in helping you remain focused on what you're looking to improve.

### Support for OPC Members Struggling with their Mental Health

Working with principals and vice-principals, I empathize with how difficult it can get when you are off work. It's easy to think in worst-case scenarios, which can cause unhealthy

levels of anxiety and sleeplessness. Starling will provide you with immediate support and guidance for managing stress and balancing the thoughts that are affecting your mental health. The Thought Balancer tool will be a good resource to use. Additionally, you may benefit from anonymous and optional group support with other leaders who are currently off work as well.

*"I am finally starting to be aware of what events are triggering my emotions. It is helping me to reduce the amount of time I am over-thinking about my current situation and all the scenarios that go with this situation."*

– Ontario-based Principal

#### How to Get Started

As an OPC Member, Starling is available to you and your family free of charge and is ready to use anywhere and anytime.

Ready to start strengthening your mental fitness and building your resilience to stress? Visit [members.starlingminds.com](http://members.starlingminds.com) and create an account using your OPC Member number. If you have any further questions, our member services team is always happy to help. They can be reached at [members@starlingminds.com](mailto:members@starlingminds.com) ▲

Dr. Andrew Miki, Registered Psychologist and Founder of Starling Minds Inc.  
✉ [members@starlingminds.com](mailto:members@starlingminds.com)

#### FOOTNOTES

1. <https://cmha.ca/about-cmha/fast-facts-about-mental-illness>
2. [https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2017/10/mental\\_illness\\_awarenessweekoctober172017world-mentalhealthdayoct.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2017/10/mental_illness_awarenessweekoctober172017world-mentalhealthdayoct.html)
3. <https://cmha.ca/about-cmha/fast-facts-about-mental-illness>
4. <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/news-article/13522/canadian-employees-report-workplace-stress-primary-cause-mental-health-concerns>
5. <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2018/employee-well-being-programs.html>
6. <https://cmha.ca/about-cmha/fast-facts-about-mental-illness>
7. <https://www.nature.com/articles/npp2015266>
8. <https://members.starlingminds.com/faqs/>



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Nancy Hanna, Principal, Upper Canada District School Board



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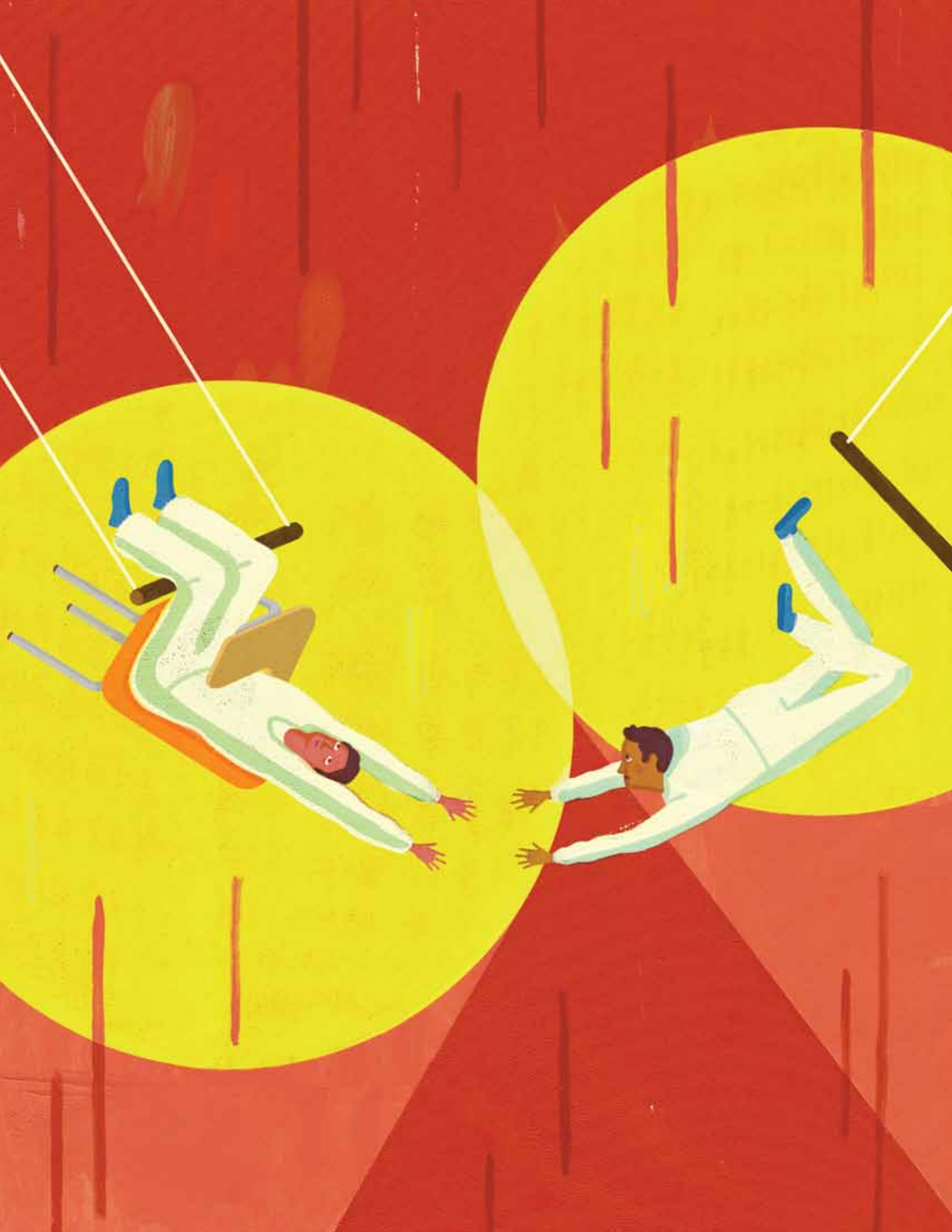
OCTOBER 2018

# Provincial Council meeting & Awards Dinner

## *HIGHLIGHTS*









**The**

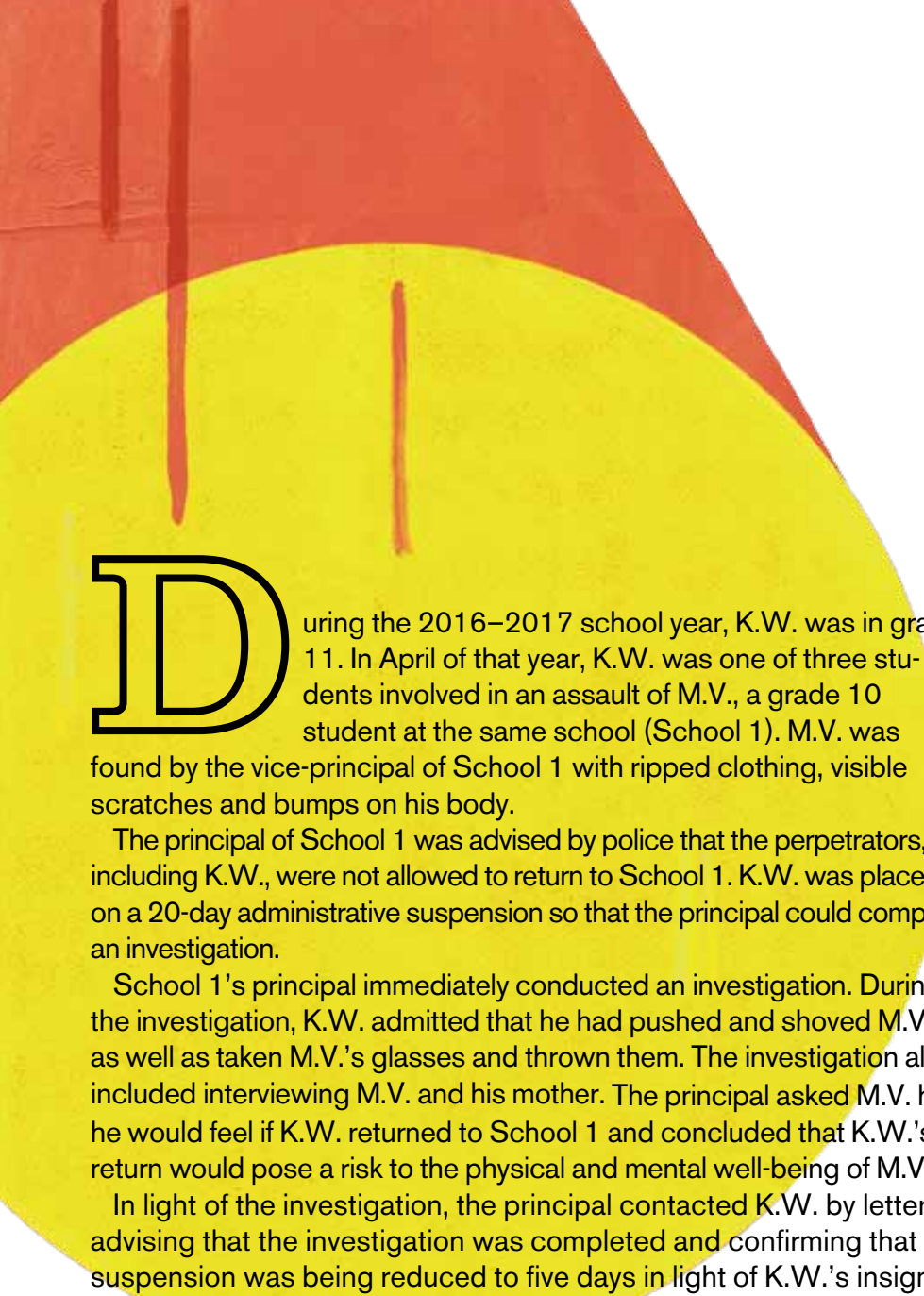
Illustration by Pete Ryan

# Fresh Start

**Policy**

Helping students make  
a successful transition  
to a new school

By Bethan Dinning



**D**uring the 2016–2017 school year, K.W. was in grade 11. In April of that year, K.W. was one of three students involved in an assault of M.V., a grade 10 student at the same school (School 1). M.V. was found by the vice-principal of School 1 with ripped clothing, visible scratches and bumps on his body.

The principal of School 1 was advised by police that the perpetrators, including K.W., were not allowed to return to School 1. K.W. was placed on a 20-day administrative suspension so that the principal could complete an investigation.

School 1's principal immediately conducted an investigation. During the investigation, K.W. admitted that he had pushed and shoved M.V., as well as taken M.V.'s glasses and thrown them. The investigation also included interviewing M.V. and his mother. The principal asked M.V. how he would feel if K.W. returned to School 1 and concluded that K.W.'s return would pose a risk to the physical and mental well-being of M.V.

In light of the investigation, the principal contacted K.W. by letter advising that the investigation was completed and confirming that the suspension was being reduced to five days in light of K.W.'s insignificant prior disciplinary history. By comparison, one of the other students involved in the assault was expelled from the board and the other was expelled from School 1.

In addition, the principal transferred K.W. to another school (School 2), pursuant to the Toronto Catholic District School Board's (the board) Fresh Start Policy. School 2 was in the same school district and offered the same academic program for K.W.

In the Fresh Start Policy, a "Fresh Start" is defined as follows:

**A non-voluntary or unusual movement of a student to a new school within the school year or at the end of a semester. Fresh Starts can be considered as a response to TCDSB Victim's Rights Policy (S.S. 13), court conditions imposed by the Criminal Justice System for an incident for which the student was not expelled, or other special circumstances as approved by the superintendent of the student's school.**

A Fresh Start is not considered disciplinary and it does not appear on the student's Ontario Student Record. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that students feel safe at school, and that those who are subject to it are provided with a successful transition. The policy sets out mechanisms to implement a Fresh Start.

Also relevant to the transfer of K.W. was the board's Victim's Rights Policy. The policy applies where a serious incident causes harm, either physical, emotional or psychological. It requires the school principal to take several steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, including separating the victim from those who caused the harm and conducting an investigation. The Victim's Rights Policy includes the following:

**7. Whenever a choice must be made as to which of the actual or intended victim, or the student(s) who may have caused the harm, must be transferred, generally (though not always), it will be the student(s) who may have caused harm who will be required to transfer to another school. This transfer is facilitated through the Fresh Start process.**

K.W. requested a review of the decision to transfer him to another school. The board's superintendent held a meeting at K.W.'s request and provided K.W. with an opportunity to explain why he should not be transferred to School 2. At the appeal hearing, K.W.

*\*Note: The following article has been written by an external lawyer. It explains the Fresh Start Policy for students.*



spoke of the impact of the transfer, particularly on his athletics career and the application of the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations Transfer Policy (the Transfer Policy). The Transfer Policy prohibits schools from including students on their school team rosters who have transferred from another school within the last 12 months. As a result of the Transfer Policy, K.W. was not permitted to be on sports teams at School 2. At the appeal, K.W. also argued that the decision to transfer him was made because he is black. K.W. never argued that he did not participate in the incident.

In his decision to deny the appeal, the superintendent concluded that he would not permit K.W. to return to School 1 as a result of concerns for M.V.’s well-being. In making this decision, he relied on the board’s Fresh Start Policy, the Victims’ Rights Policy and evidence from School 1’s principal. Finally, he concluded that there was no evidence that K.W. was given a Fresh Start because he is black.

K.W. decided to apply to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to judicially review the principal and the board’s decision to transfer K.W. to a new school at the beginning of the 2017–2018 school year under the Fresh Start Policy. The Court dismissed K.W.’s application and concluded that the transfer was not disciplinary in nature. Rather, the Court held that it was a reasonable exercise of the board’s authority to transfer students. In upholding

the board’s decision, the Court confirmed the importance of procedural fairness and conducting a thorough investigation.

In his application for judicial review, K.W. raised three legal issues:

- whether the board lacked jurisdiction to impose a non-voluntary school transfer on a student for discipline purposes pursuant to its Fresh Start Policy
- whether K.W. was denied procedural fair-

ness in the appeal process before the superintendent and

tion and that the Fresh Start Policy was simply an attempt to avoid the more extensive procedural framework afforded to students during an expulsion. The Court disagreed with this characterization.

In considering the board’s jurisdiction, the Court reviewed relevant sections of the *Education Act* (the Act) and Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145, *Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour* (PPM

145). Specifically, the Court relied on subsection 265(1) (m) of the Act, which prescribes the duty of a principal to “refuse to admit to the school or classroom a person whose presence in the school or classroom would, in the principal’s judgment, be detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of the pupils.” Further, the Court confirmed that the Act gives students the right to attend a school, not any particular school.

The Court confirmed that PPM 145 contemplates *non-*

*disciplinary* school transfers to preserve school safety. This is consistent with a school board’s obligation to maintain policies and organization structures to promote student achievement and well-being. The Court concluded as follows:

**We see nothing in the Fresh Start Policy that suggests it was designed to impose non-voluntary transfers for disciplinary reasons. There is nothing in it to suggest that its purpose is disciplinary. The Fresh Start Policy is one of the board’s suite of policies that deal with the management of student**

**Fresh Start policies are not disciplinary mechanisms and should not be used as such. Rather, they should be implemented with a view of dealing with the management of student behaviour and student relations in the classroom and in schools.**

ness in the appeal process before the superintendent and

- whether the decision of the superintendent was unreasonable.

K.W. did not advance the argument of racial profiling before the Court, which had been used during the appeal before the superintendent.

First, K.W. argued that the board did not have the authority to develop and implement a Fresh Start Policy. K.W. alleged that the Act contained a complete procedural framework for expulsion matters elsewhere in the legisla-



**The purpose of the policy is to ensure that students feel safe at school, and that those who are subject to it are provided with a **successful transition.****

**behaviour and student relations in the classroom and in schools. It is focused on student achievement and the protection of victims, and is consistent with the policies of the Ministry of Education.**

Accordingly, the Court concluded that, when read in the context of the Act and PPM 145, the board had the authority to adopt the Fresh Start Policy as it was intended to promote the safety and well-being of students. It was not, in the Court's view, a disciplinary mechanism intended to circumvent the expulsion provisions, or any other parts, of the Act.

Second, the Court reviewed whether K.W. was denied procedural fairness in the appeal proceeding before the superintendent, considering that the decision to uphold the principal's decision to transfer K.W. was an important

one that would have an impact on K.W.'s education. K.W. was moved from a school where he had been a student for a number of years, where he had friends and where he had excelled as an athlete on school teams. In light of the importance of the decision to K.W., the Court agreed that K.W., his family and his representatives had a right to be heard.

The Court concluded that the board and the superintendent met their procedural obligations to K.W. Specifically, the superintendent provided K.W., his family and a community leader the opportunity to be heard and to present their views with the assistance of a lawyer during the meeting to review the principal's decision to transfer K.W. to School 2. The superintendent's task was to gather infor-

mation from K.W. and the principal and then come to a decision based on the information before him, taking into account relevant policies and legislation.

Third, the Court decided that the decision of the superintendent was within a range of possible, acceptable outcomes, given the facts and the law of the case. K.W.'s argument focused on the harshness of the transfer, given the impact on K.W.'s life and athletic aspirations. However, the superintendent had to weigh the impact on M.V., as well as K.W. He had concerns about both the physical and psychological well-being of M.V. if K.W. was present in School 1. The Court affirmed that "M.V. was entitled to a safe and comfortable environment in which to pursue his education."



The parties agreed that, in reviewing the reasonableness of the decision, deference was owed to the decision of a principal and superintendent with respect to the advisability of a student's transfer from a particular school. The Court concluded that the superintendent reasonably exercised his authority.

The decision in *K.W. v. Toronto Catholic District School Board* confirms the jurisdiction of school boards to implement Fresh Start policies with the goal of ensuring the safety and well-being of students. This is in accordance with school boards' and, in particular, school principals' obligations under the Act and PPM 145 to ensure the safety and well-being of students. Fresh Start policies are not disciplinary mechanisms and should not be used as such. Rather, they should be implemented with a view of dealing with the management of student behaviour and student relations in the classroom and in schools. Fresh Start policies should be focused on student achievement and the protection of victims.

The decision also highlights the importance of providing students and their families with an appeal process for any decisions under Fresh

Start policies, as well as underlining certain procedural requirements for school boards to consider. Conducting a thorough and timely investigation is important. Students and their families should have an opportunity to be heard and provide their version of events. Such investigations should be conducted in accordance with school board policy and, if necessary, in consultation with the applicable superintendent. In this case, both the school principal and the board's superintendent fulfilled their obligations to investigate the incident giving rise to the transfer and its potential implications on both K.W. and M.V. Ultimately, the decision to transfer K.W. to School

2 was implemented with a consideration of both students' well-being in mind.

In the circumstances of this case, the transfer of a student under a Fresh Start Policy was a reasonable exercise of a school board's authority. This case provides helpful guidance for school administrators who are implementing a Fresh Start policy, as well as underscoring the importance of good investigation techniques when making administrative decisions about the well-being of students. ▲

Bethan Dinning is a lawyer at Borden Ladner Gervais.

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**Application Deadline: February 15**

**April 23 – May 26, 2019**

Leading the Innovative School

**Application Deadline: April 5**

## Principal's Qualification Program

**Spring 2019**

March 23 – 24

April 6 – 7

April 27 – 28

May 11 – 12

May 25 – 26

June 8 – 9

**Application Deadline: March 16**

## Emerging Leader Development

**Program (ELDP)**

**March 22 – April 1, 2019**

Growing Your Personal Leadership Resources (PLR's)

**Application Deadline: March 15**

## Supervisory Officer's Qualification

**Program (SOQP)**

**July 7 – 9, 2019**

Module 1

**July 10 – 12, 2019**

Module 2

**July 7 – 9, 2019**

Module 3

**July 10 – 12, 2019**

Module 4

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



## Student Artwork Submission

We invite students (individuals or groups) from across Ontario to design artwork that will be featured in our magazine. This submission comes from Emma Ehrenfeld of Char-Lan District High School in the Upper Canada District School Board.

If you would like to submit a piece of artwork, please email [psweeney@principals.ca](mailto:psweeney@principals.ca).

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## Additional Qualification Programs

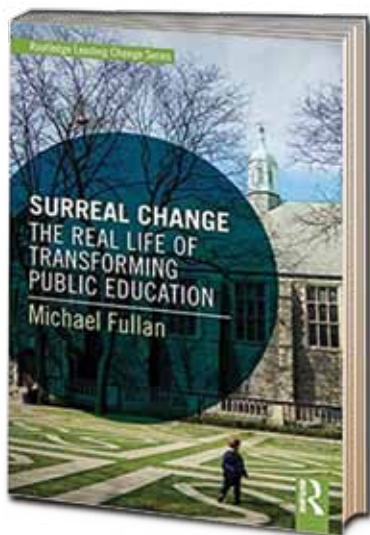
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## Surreal Change: The Real Life of Transforming Public Education

By Michael Fullan  
Routledge  
ISBN: 978-1-138-92684-4  
Reviewed by Peter Creer

I recently tuned into *The Agenda* with Steve Paikin who had Michael Fullan as one of the guests. Fullan was there to discuss his 50 years in education and to introduce his new book, which I went out and purchased the next day.

As I read the book, entitled *Surreal Change: The Real Life Of Transforming Public Education*, I found myself thinking over and over again that this was written by Fullan as an autobiography, but it also turned out to be a trip down my own memory lane.

When I first started considering moving into administration, I came upon Fullan's best-selling leadership focused book *Leading in a Culture of Change*. It was a revelation for me and the aspiring leaders in the Principal's Qualification Program. As my career progressed, Michael Fullan was the writer I looked to for guidance and support in my day-to-day work as a school principal.

In *Surreal Change*, Fullan has used his vast lexicon of writing as the guideposts for the journey through his career in educational change. He divides the book into four sections covering his own education, his time as a professor during the creation of OISE (Ontario

Institute for Studies in Education) and his experiences as a public policy consultant in both the United Kingdom and Ontario. It is a story of challenges, but it is also about solutions. It introduces his "12 Seminal Ideas" that speak directly to school leaders.

Probably the most fascinating part of the book for me was the way that Fullan opens up about the more personal moments in his life. I would never have imagined that Fullan was a big hockey player growing up or that his path into education was "a path of least resistance." I have heard him speak on many occasions over the years, but this book has shown me that the academic side of his life is only part of his story. It was interested to read about his experience at the International Confederation of Principals' Conference, which the OPC hosted in 2011. I remember sitting in the audience watching the scene that

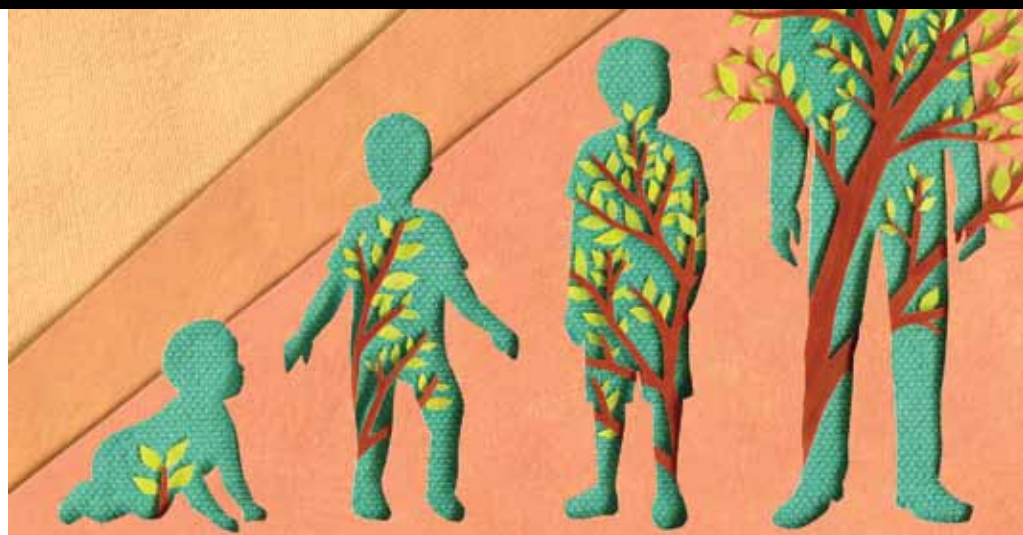
Fullan describes in the book. He was participating in a conversation with Andy Hargreaves and I remember the moment when the two colleagues went toe-to-toe and made a number of cutting comments toward each other. Fullan addresses the moment and you can clearly see the passion and drive that he has when it comes to the work in which he continues to be involved.

*Surreal Change: The Real Life Of Transforming Public Education* is a fascinating book that is a great introduction to how Fullan has played an integral part in the evolution of educational system thinking and the implementation of educational change around the world. However, for me, it was an opportunity to make the connections between the considerable impact that he has had in education and how that work has impacted the work that I have done over my career.

Thank you Mr. Fullan for the journey. ▲

Peter Creer is a Principal in the Durham District School Board.

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# Looking Back

## My journey with the OPC since its inception

Reflecting on my “second career” at the OPC, after many years in a classroom, school and small district, is a comforting and rewarding experience. I will always be thankful for the

opportunity to have been part of the initial planning team that established this organization.

Using the analogy of giving birth to an infant and supporting its growth and development into young adulthood captures the last 20 years of my working life. The days before April 1, 1998 (the “birth” of the OPC), were filled with angst, excitement, fear, anticipation, hope and strategic planning. Serving on the Interim Council to establish the governance, purpose, services and general modus operandi of this new association was, for me, like going to Mars. I had no capacity to design constitutions or plan budgets. Thankfully others were experts in those areas. The provision of workshops and other professional learning was my expertise and where I found my niche in this new organization.

From the start, a Principal’s Qualification Program designed and delivered by practising principals was our goal. Until then, the PQP was the exclusive privilege

of the universities. As we’ve matured and demonstrated our ability in professional learning for the academic and practical learning needs of aspiring, newly-appointed and veteran leaders at the school and system level, our university partners have become integral to our platforms.

The highlights of raising the “child” called the OPC are fascinating and are now globally recognized as the standard to which others aspire. Designing and delivering programs by practising leaders was an innovative principle that was embraced early on. Remaining political but non-partisan meant working in a trusting relationship with policy makers and Ministry directives and gave us credibility as the advocates of the best learning conditions for students. Seeking input from Members and embracing their feedback was foundational. Offering a continuum of programs for leadership development, in partnership with school districts, provided provincial perspectives with local implementation. Supporting

principal learning teams to break down the barriers of isolation, and networking with a focus on shared learning, is a key element that is respected and emulated by others. Putting research and theory into practice and working alongside acclaimed educational researchers provides the integrity needed to meet the ongoing needs of our Members.

Twenty years is not a long time in the general sense of an organization’s lifespan, but it has been 20 years of raising the profile and the professionalism of school leaders. Student learning and well-being has always been, and will continue to be, the standard by which we measure our success.

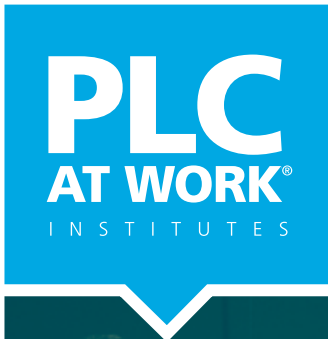
Now that the OPC is a young adult, ready to embark on the next phase of its growth and development, it is time to be responsive and attuned to the professional learning needs of the next generation of leaders. Remaining nimble, open, alert to trends and approachable for our Members and other stakeholders will be key. The formative years have provided a firm foundation and the future will be as bright as we want to make it. ▲

After 20 years with the OPC, Joanne Robinson retired at the end of 2018. We thank her for her significant contributions to the OPC and wish her well with whatever her third career will be!



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Employees from the broader education community (early years, K-12, post-secondary, etc.) within 5 years of expected retirement... or anyone else who wants to learn more about retirement planning.

#### Attendees receive:

- Comprehensive retirement planning handbook
- Deluxe padfolio to organize your retirement planning documents
- Chance to win exciting draw prizes

