

Summer 2013

Leaders & Learners

The official magazine of the Canadian
Association of School Administrators

Association canadienne des administrateurs
et des administratrices scolaires

Striking a Balance: Minimizing Stress, Maximizing Effectiveness

achieving success

collaborative approaches

stress-management

job security

sharing, collaboration
and support

engaging teachers
as partners

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What's New on APPLIKI?

APPLIKI is a web-based clearinghouse through which Ontario districts can share resources and tools to support leadership development. Districts are encouraged to upload leadership products, plans and resources to APPLIKI and to explore how they might tailor the work of other districts for their own use. For more information, go to: appliki.apandrose.com



The Ontario's Leadership Framework (OLF) 2012 identifies the school-level and system-level leadership practices that have been shown, through research and professional practice, to have the greatest impact on student achievement and well-being. For more information, go to: www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/content/framework



The Safe and Accepting Schools Toolkit Project supports school and system leaders with the implementation of a bullying prevention program and the whole-school approach to creating and maintaining a positive school climate. For more information, go to: live.iel.immix.ca/safeandacceptingschools



The Self-Assessment Tools are aligned with the leadership practices of the OLF 2012 which enable potential and practicing school leaders to assess their practices in reference to effective leadership practices and personal leadership resources required for leadership positions in the province of Ontario. For more information, go to: live.iel.immix.ca/content/self-assessment-tools-background

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L'ILE rassemble tous les leaders scolaires, les leaders des conseils scolaires et les leaders du système afin d'explorer les pratiques novatrices du leadership en éducation.

Du nouveau dans APPLIKI

APPLIKI est un centre d'échange en ligne au moyen duquel les conseils scolaires de l'Ontario peuvent partager leurs ressources et leurs outils afin d'appuyer le développement du leadership. Les conseils scolaires sont encouragés à téléverser leurs produits, leurs plans et leurs ressources relatifs au leadership sur APPLIKI et à explorer les façons d'adapter le travail des autres conseils à leurs besoins. Pour plus d'informations, visitez le : appliki.apandrose.com



Le Cadre de leadership de l'Ontario (CLO) 2012 rend compte des pratiques des leaders scolaires et des leaders du système reconnues par des spécialistes en éducation comme étant celles qui favorisent le plus le rendement et le bien-être des élèves. Pour plus de renseignements, visitez le : www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/content/cadre-de-leadership



Le projet sur les écoles sécuritaires et tolérantes : la boîte à outils vise à aider les leaders scolaires et les leaders du système à faire la mise en œuvre d'un programme de prévention sur l'intimidation et à adopter une approche globale pour créer et maintenir un climat positif à l'école. Pour plus de renseignements, visitez le : live.iel.immix.ca/safeandacceptingschools/fr_CA



Les outils d'autoréflexion sont liés aux pratiques de leadership du CLO 2012 et proposent aux leaders en poste et leaders potentiels un moyen d'évaluer leurs pratiques en regard de leurs pratiques et leurs ressources personnelles en matière de leadership requises pour occuper un poste de leader dans la province de l'Ontario. Pour plus d'informations, visitez le : www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/content/outils-dautoreflexion

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Tapping into tap water again

When tap water went by the wayside in favor of bottled water in the 1990s, few considered the high environmental costs. Now tap water is in vogue again and, thanks to a modern water delivery solution, refilling and reusing water bottles is quick and easy.

Canadians drink more bottled water than coffee, tea, apple juice or milk. In fact, Canadians consume an average of 60 liters of bottled water per person per year. That's a whopping 2 billion liters annually.

While many Canadian cities, including Charlottetown, P.E.I., Nelson, BC and London, ON, have banned the sale of water bottles on some level, 88 percent of Canada's plastic water bottles don't get recycled. Instead they end up in landfills or going to incineration.

The fact is plastic bottles are among the fastest-growing form of municipal solid waste in Canada. Yet, in spite of the staggering environmental impact, bottled water has become such an ingrained part of our lifestyle that we sometimes forget there's an alternative.

Its name? Tap water.

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The OASIS VersaFiller[®] quickly and easily turns various drinking fountains into eco-friendly bottle fillers," says OASIS regional sales manager Chris Romagnoli. "Nobody likes filling a water bottle in the lavatory sink, it's awkward, and the bottle never gets completely filled. With the VersaFiller, students, faculty and staff can easily refill their own reusable water bottles."

Besides being highly convenient, VersaFiller stations are helping school campuses "go green." Many North American colleges and universities including Pepperdine, Michigan State and Marshall University in the U.S. have transformed ordinary drinking fountains into eco-friendly bottle filling stations with the VersaFiller.

Reducing plastic waste across campus

Margie Phillips, Marshall University's sustainability manager, says VersaFiller bottle filling stations were key to helping the University reduce plastic consumption across campus.



"Our students loved their bottled water," says Phillips, "so we did a reusable bottle giveaway (to encourage the switch). Now they love the stations because they can easily fill the bottles, and it doesn't cost them any money. We plan to install one station for every single floor in every building across campus."

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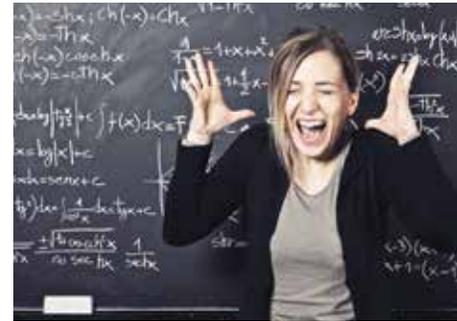
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**Summer 2013
PUBLISHED FOR:**
**The Canadian Association
of School Administrators /
L'Association Canadienne
des Administrateurs et des
Administratrices Scolaires**
1123 Glenashton Drive
Oakville, Ontario
L6H 5M1
Tel: 905-845-2345
Fax: 905-845-2044
www.casa-acas.ca

PUBLISHED BY:
Matrix Group Publishing Inc.
Publications Agreement Number:
40609661
Return undeliverable Canadian
addresses to:

52 Donald Street, Suite 300
Winnipeg, MB Canada R3C 1L6
Toll Free: 866-999-1299
Toll Free Fax: 866-244-2544
www.matrixgroupinc.net

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Give Yourself Permission to Unwind and Refresh



Roger Nippard
CASA/ACAS President

Balancing one's personal and workplace health is a timely theme for this summer issue of our magazine. In this edition, we take a look at various initiatives our colleagues across Canada have implemented to do what both research and common sense tell us—namely, that it is important to educate the whole child and cultivate healthy minds, brains, bodies and hearts.

As superintendent of a rural school division in north-eastern Alberta, my staff serve families and students in an area that is exploding economically, primarily as a result of rapid development in the oil and gas sector. More so than in most places, individuals here have to choose between “their time or their money.”

Our major centres have large “shadow populations,” as many individuals live in work camps and there is huge additional stress placed on our municipal infrastructure and services. Our schools are increasingly dealing with “shift kids,” as families are either living elsewhere, or even if “home” is local, they see little of each other as parents and guardians are participating in a very fast-paced, workaholic, lifestyle. In our schools there is an ever-widening discrepancy in economic equity and education is relied upon even more so to “level the playing field” and provide equity of opportunity.

This is my sixth year as superintendent and one of the most significant changes in the education context is the extent to which we are wired and accessible 24/7. I certainly see the consequences that a frenetic pace can have on our families and our own personal time and interests. This edition provides specific examples of initiatives and programs that school jurisdictions have implemented to assist in stepping back from the frenzy of our work lives and in seeking physical and spiritual renewal. For many of us, a better balance begins simply with giving ourselves express permission to define ourselves less by our work and understanding that it is important to find time to unwind and refresh.

Alberta has just gone through a major public consultation, Inspiring Education, and identified that we want our students to graduate with the three E's: *Engaged Thinker* and *Ethical Citizen* with an *Entrepreneurial Spirit*. As I look at how programming has evolved in schools, I see a much greater emphasis today on our students giving back to their communities. As a society, and as individuals, we are placing a higher value on collaboration, relationships and connecting with others. Today's youth are indeed “searching for meaning” and looking more intentionally to either volunteer their time to serve others or consciously making a decision to move into careers in the helping professions.

To conclude, the old adage “Education starts at home” is certainly appropriate. A story is told of a mother coming to Gandhi asking for help in persuading her child to give up eating too many sweets. Gandhi replied that she would have to bring her child back to him in two weeks. Upon their return Gandhi took the child aside and counselled him about the dangers of eating too much sugar. The puzzled mother asked Gandhi, “Why did you wait two weeks to talk to him?” Gandhi replied, “Because two weeks ago I too was eating sugar.”

Enjoy the read! I look forward to seeing many of our readers at our upcoming conference, July 4 to7, in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**For many of us,
a better balance
begins simply with
giving ourselves
express permission
to define ourselves
less by our work
and understanding
that it is important
to find time to
unwind and refresh.**

TEACH don't BAN

Chocolate fundraisers support the spirit of school food and beverage policies. Here's why...

Teaching works, banning doesn't.

91% of adults agree that teaching about how treats fit into a healthy lifestyle is better than banning chocolate fundraising¹.

Common sense and behavioural science support that treats are part of a healthy active lifestyle.

92% of dietitians say that people are more likely to maintain a balanced lifestyle when they don't deprive themselves of treats².

In the world of treats, chocolate is one of the healthier options.

Eaten in moderation, chocolate has many benefits. It's rich in antioxidants, flavonoids, vitamins and minerals, and contains valuable calcium and iron.

Chocolate could lower your risk for heart disease!

British Medical Journal Research: The study, involving more than 114,000 people, showed that higher consumption levels of all types of chocolate, was significantly associated with a reduced risk of cardiometabolic disorders. This beneficial association was significant for cardiovascular disease (37% reduction), diabetes (31%) and stroke (29%)³. Chocolate might be a viable instrument in the prevention of cardiometabolic disorders if consumed in moderation.

The launch of a chocolate fundraiser is an opportunity to teach kids about healthy lifestyles and World's Finest® Chocolate can help:

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Teaching material to help educate children on the importance of portion control and physical activity. Available with each fundraising campaign.

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Raising more than money

It's a good life, when your thoughts are bright and you're eating right!

PORTION CONTROL EATING THE RIGHT AMOUNT

It's easy to get carried away when you're excited about fundraising. But remember, it's important to eat smart and stay healthy. Here are some tips to help you stay on track:

- Measure your portions. Use a measuring cup and spoon to help you control your portions.
- Eat slowly. It takes time for your brain to tell you when you're full.
- Don't drink alcohol. It can affect your judgment and lead to overeating.
- Stay hydrated. Drink water throughout the day.
- Get enough sleep. Being tired can make it harder to resist temptation.

It's a good life, when your thoughts are bright and you're eating right!

- Practice portion control. Eat smaller amounts and savor each bite.
- Remember that chocolate is a treat, not a "reward" food. Enjoy it in moderation.
- Be healthy and happy. Eat smart and stay on track.
- Stay hydrated. Drink water throughout the day.
- Get enough sleep. Being tired can make it harder to resist temptation.

For more information, visit www.thinkbigeatsmart.com

1. September 2010 Ipsos Poll of 1,000+ adults (including 500 parents of children aged 4-11)
2. Survey of Nutrition Professionals: An online survey of 450 registered dietitians (RD) by the Society Center for Health & Nutrition.
3. "British Medical Journal", "Chocolate consumption and cardiometabolic disorders: 7 studies, involving 114,005 people, studies up to Oct. 2010"

Finding the Right Balance

Striking a Balance is the theme for this edition of *Leaders & Learners*. When most of us consider that notion, it usually means striking the balance between work life and home life. Each of us fulfills a variety of roles in both of those settings...from employee to leader, mentor to spouse, partner to parent, grandparent to caregiver to.... For most senior education leaders across Canada, that balance is a worthy aspiration that is not always easy to achieve.

The articles in this edition illustrate that the topic is timely and knows no geographic boundaries, as we received submissions from both large and small, rural and urban districts from across the country. The articles highlight research-based and promising practices based on the experience of leaders in several districts, with a focus on staff as well as students. My thanks to the contributing districts and writers for their perspectives on an important topic.

I encourage each of us to work toward that balance and to know its importance for those with whom we live and work. The Canadian Mental Health Association (www.cmha.ca) has a variety of resources to help each of us, regardless of our role, to become more aware of and attuned to the need for work-life balance.

Beginning with the Fall/Winter edition of *Leaders & Learners*, we will connect the theme of our magazines to the theme of the Summer Conference. The theme for the Winter 2013/2014 and Summer 2014 editions is Student Engagement. We have received a lot of great abstracts on this topic, from right across the country, and we hope to receive an abstract from you, the next time we put out the call!

Finally, as my first year draws to a close in my new role, I want to express my appreciation to members of the CASA Board of Directors for their support and commitment to the organization. There are a number of exciting changes on the horizon for CASA as we embark on a new Strategic Plan and I look forward to continuing the great work that we have begun together.



Ken Bain
CASA/ACAS Executive Director

For most senior education leaders across Canada, that balance is a worthy aspiration that is not always easy to achieve.

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Providing Staff With the Tools and Strategies to Achieve Success

Achieving personal and professional satisfaction through collaboration, professional development and improved results.

By Curtis Brown and Brent Kaulback

Teaching is a high-stress profession and pressure upon schools and teachers has grown considerably over the past few decades. High stakes testing, increased accountability and the expectation to improve student achievement results—all within a milieu of declining budgets, diminishing support and larger class sizes—can overwhelm and obscure the rewards of teaching and take its toll on the health and wellness of educators.

Coinciding with this trend toward increased stress in education is the fact that mental illnesses are on the rise everywhere: “Nearly a quarter of the country’s working population is currently affected by mental health problems or illnesses leading to absenteeism, ‘presenteeism’ (coming to work but being less than fully productive) and turnover.” (see www.mentalhealth-commission.ca).



Common Strategies

In recognition of the relationship between mental health and teacher effectiveness, many employers have taken steps to enhance favourable workplace practices that reduce stressors and help employees respond positively to stressful stimuli. Much of the effort has been in the area of mental health awareness and counselling support, with the hope that information related to stress-management and anxiety-reduction will help build resiliency in the psycho-emotional make-up of those affected.

It is hoped that through these services and supports, teachers will be better prepared to manage the natural stress and anxiety inherent within our high-paced and continually evolving profession—they might perceive stressful stimuli as eustress (good stress) as opposed to distress, and as a positive challenge instead of a negative threat.

Our Context

Like most modern school boards, the South Slave Divisional Educational Council (SSDEC) is part of a system that offers enhanced counselling and mental health services to support its employees. The SSDEC adheres to the employment standards and services offered by the Government of the Northwest Territories, an organization recently recognized as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers for 2013 (see www.canadastop100.com/national).

Its comprehensive benefit package includes: an induction program for new teachers; access to specialized counseling, medical and psychological practitioners; mental health awareness campaigns; and respectful practices in regard to leave, disability and return-to-work programs. This, coupled with long periods of labour peace and relatively high job security, has gone far in minimizing stress factors in the workplace.

The SSDEC itself is a very small education jurisdiction that employs approximately 175 teachers and support staff spread among eight schools in five communities located along the southern shores of Great Slave Lake. All communities are small, by Canadian standards, and all are rooted in the rich and diverse history of the Aboriginal people who populate the towns and villages. The South Slave is particularly unique with five official languages: South Slavey, Cree, Chipewyan, French and English, and approximately 70 per cent of the student enrolment are of Aboriginal descent.

Whereas counselling and mental health support can provide perspective and help one cope with stress, there is much to be said for providing staff with the tools and strategies they need to achieve success. SSDEC teachers have been given those tools and are now masters of their own domain.

Living and teaching in Canada's north, with its interplay of cultures and, what many regard as its harsh climate and isolated environment, introduces some stress and anxiety factors that are not common to most other Canadian school jurisdictions.

In spite of these geographical and cultural differences, we do share the same economic and political realities of other school boards. As with other boards, accountability factors, reductions in budgets, increases in class size—expanding demands and declining supports—is the reality of the SSDEC. Like their colleagues from other school boards, calls for greater student achievement, concerns over student behaviour and increased workload, coupled with limited student supports have all been cited as critical stressors by SSDEC teachers.

The SSDEC Strategy

Compelled by a genuine desire to support staff and maximize their effectiveness, and mindful of the fact that many stressors are a result of realities about which we have little control, the SSDEC has supported teachers to impressive accomplishments and greater professional satisfaction. The Council has accomplished this by focusing on key areas that fall within their purview—that of professional development and collaborative practices focussed on improved teaching and learning.

By engaging teachers as partners in an exciting initiative designed to raise student achievement, and providing them with the resources, strategies and supports they need to effect change in classroom instruction, logic dictates that teachers would become more energized by improvements in student engagement and student success, and this would translate into greater personal and professional satisfaction and resiliency.

Leadership for Literacy

The SSDEC's initiative to strengthen the instructional capacity of our teachers was labeled *Leadership for Literacy*, in recognition that success would require the alignment and ownership of efforts by all district and school administrators and staff. Like most school board initiatives, this one was born from an urgent need to improve student outcomes.

The SSDEC faced a harsh reality with student achievement results revealing that just over 50 per cent of our Grade 3, 6 and 9 students were achieving at or above the Alberta standard in reading and mathematics. Although some were satisfied with these results, and had been for many years, the harsh antithesis was that about half of our students had limited prospects for success in school.

Their challenges magnify as they moved into the working world, given that low literacy rates are precursor to high unemployment, family dysfunction, poor health and many other socially damaging issues. Compelled by a moral imperative to *do better*, the members of the elected Council challenged administration to improve these results. In spite of our many social challenges, staff were given a target of 80 per cent of our students achieving average or better in their reading achievement, based on Canadian norms.

Evidence-based Instructional Strategies

Although the goal was clear, the pathway that would lead towards this target was not. The first task of senior staff was to delve into the research and try to find those nuggets of best practices that might yield the greatest results. Many theories and paradigms were considered and the framework for a new approach was developed collaboratively; an approach that would emphasize quality

instruction based on a *gradual release of responsibility* model—moving students from support to independence. The cornerstones of this approach were research-based instructional strategies, such as small group and differentiated guided reading.

Literacy Coaches / Resources

For many teachers this was a new paradigm, a shift in instruction about which few were familiar. Ongoing support would be required if we were to expect our teachers to master these strategies and implement them with fidelity.

Here too, the SSDEC trustees, not only demanding in their target, were willing to finance this initiative. They allocated funding to purchase an extensive collection of levelled reading resources and, more importantly, approved the hiring of eight literacy coaches—one for each school.

The Literacy Coaches, mentored by two regional Literacy Coordinators, became the key ingredient in effecting instructional change. The Literacy Coaches provided all staff with direct support through a job-embedded model of professional development using the frame of *Teach* (mini-inservices), *Model* (in-class demonstrations) and *Practice* (with observation and feedback). In many of our schools, full-staff inservicing was provided weekly while the other tasks of joint planning, modelling the strategies in the classroom and debriefing with teachers as they practiced the strategies filled out the timetables of each Literacy Coach.

Results

The focus on high-yield instructional strategies, coupled with this extensive offering of professional development and in-class support, soon began to bear fruit. Year to year, our students' reading achievement steadily increased to the point where, as of 2012, students from the SSDEC are merely one percentage point below the Canadian norm (77 per cent) for reading. Of particular note is the fact that this initiative has dramatically impacted our smaller Aboriginal schools with youth who, prior to the initiative struggled with reading, are now accomplished readers, many of whom read considerably above average or superior in comparison to their Canadian peers.

The success in reading has positively impacted perceptions of all as evidenced by stakeholder survey results. Teachers have reported greater student engagement through this initiative and a sense of pride with the

results they have achieved. As a group, they have become more energized by these successes and have increased confidence that their hard work and dedication is of value. Students report, in greater numbers, that they like school and are increasingly trying to improve and do their best. Parents too, report that they are more satisfied with their child's growth as readers and are increasingly satisfied with what their children are learning at school (92 per cent). Having parental partners on-side and acknowledging the hard work of our teachers goes far in promoting job satisfaction.

Collaboration (Student Support)

Yet another area of change—an area often cited as a significant stressor—is that of student support. Like other boards, the SSDEC is faced with increasing demand and declining support. Through this initiative, our in-school Literacy Coaches and Program Support Teachers also support principals and staff in the development and implementation of a school specific *pyramid of interventions*, designed to direct the most appropriate supports to students at-risk and in need. Complimenting this approach has been a system of regular class reviews that engage teachers and members of the school's leadership team in review of the progress of each student in order to realign supports based on need. Our mantra has been one of *push-in* with teamwork and support rather than the *pull-out* model of withdrawal and isolation.

Collaboration (PLCs)

This collaborative approach has magnified even further through the very intentional development of *Professional Learning Communities* (PLCs) in each of our schools. Here, teams of teachers come together frequently (one hour per week in most schools) to determine essential outcomes, develop common assessments, review student achievement data, and design programs and plans that emphasize strategies and supports for student success.

The pyramids of intervention and PLCs, when considered together, helped to develop relationships and the ethos of teamwork in schools. Teaching is no longer the isolated, closed-door profession it once was but, instead, is a team profession with dialogue and activity. Teachers stand together and work together for the betterment of our students—and to the betterment of themselves.

When considering the issue of job satisfaction, there is value in reducing isolation and helping each teacher discover their worth and

the worth of others through a collaborative approach to teaching and a commitment to ensuring *success for all*. Staff who perceive themselves as an integral part of a team successfully working towards greater student success will find more satisfaction in both their personal and professional lives.

Encouragement and Celebration

More significant benefit and personal fulfillment is accrued through these changes when the dedication and hard work of our teaching staff is nurtured, acknowledged and celebrated. Senior staff have made it a point to visit each classroom formally at least twice a year, building relationships, observing the implementation of these strategies, discussing results with teachers and affirming their risk-taking and contributions to this initiative. At first these visits were viewed with suspicion by some, but over time, these concerns were assuaged by rising achievement levels and the complimentary nature of the commentary, and friendly and appreciative (strengths-based) discussions during the debriefs. This has become yet another accepted plank in the efforts to raise student achievement and elevate the profile and professionalism of teachers in the process.

The entire initiative has received a high level of notice and acclaim. The Government of the Northwest Territories, impressed by the results, accepted it as a pilot program and has subsequently provided funding for literacy coordinators in every region of the territory. Many teachers in the region, buoyed by student success and the professional collaboration, have received regional, territorial and national awards for the work they have done. In the past six years, more than 25 major awards have been bestowed upon teaching staff or partners in this initiative. All award recipients would acknowledge that the focus on student achievement and commitment to the collaborative approach has helped each achieve a greater level of excellence.

Conclusion

As indicated by the *Mental Health Commission of Canada*, "The workplace can be a strong contributor to mental wellbeing, giving people the opportunity to feel productive and achieve their potential." Accordingly, the Council and staff of the SSDEC approached the distressing student achievement data with a can-do attitude. Through the collective efforts of trustees and district and schools staff, much has been

Continued on page 16

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Continued from page 14
accomplished. Staff embraced the lofty student achievement target set by school board officials, and partners are increasingly taking ownership and pride and benefitting from this success. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, "Success has many parents, failure is an orphan."

Even though our corporate responsibility was to maximize student success, and the target set by the Council trustees was linked to this vision, the success of the initiative has raised the bar of excellence and our teachers have become more adept at managing their classes and providing quality instruction in spite of the many stressors and challenges that still exist.

Whereas counselling and mental health support can provide perspective and help one cope with stress, there is much to be said for

providing staff with the tools and strategies they need to achieve success. SSDEC teachers have been given those tools and are now masters of their own domain. Many, energized by the results and the high level of engagement, successfully manage potentially damaging stressful stimuli in their personal and professional lives. For those who have not, the SSDEC continues to offer support. Our core belief that all *students* can learn applies in our relationship with all our *staff* as well. Wherever individuals are on the learning continuum is fine, provided they are striving to learn and improve every day.

The lesson of this initiative is that problems and challenges can be overcome through a focus on teamwork, creative problem solving and commitment to results. By setting a goal,

directing everybody's efforts and energy towards the target, seeking support and guidance from others and celebrating small wins, problems can be overcome and challenges met. Confronting one's challenges with emotional intelligence and optimism, rather than being overcome by them, is part of the philosophy for personal wellness and professional excellence that continues to strengthen in this exciting educational journey known as *Leadership for Literacy*. ○

Dr. Curtis Brown is Superintendent for the SSDEC (Fort Smith, NWT) and was named Canadian Superintendent of the Year (2011) by CASA. Brent Kaulback is Assistant Superintendent for the SSDEC (Fort Smith, NWT) and recipient of the Inspire Indigenous Education Partner Award (2013).

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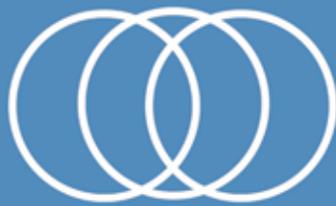


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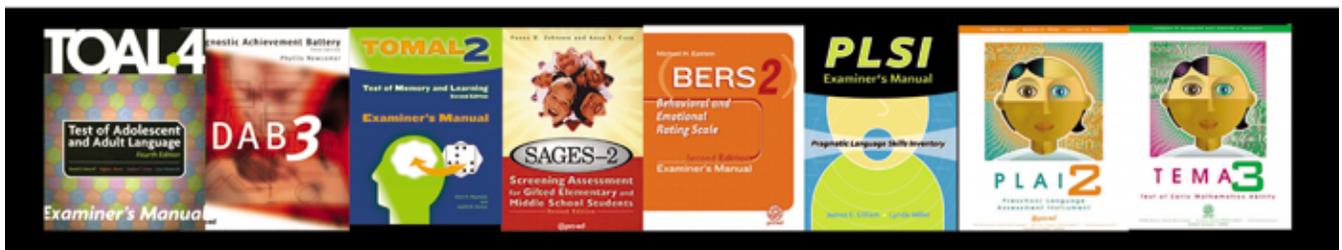
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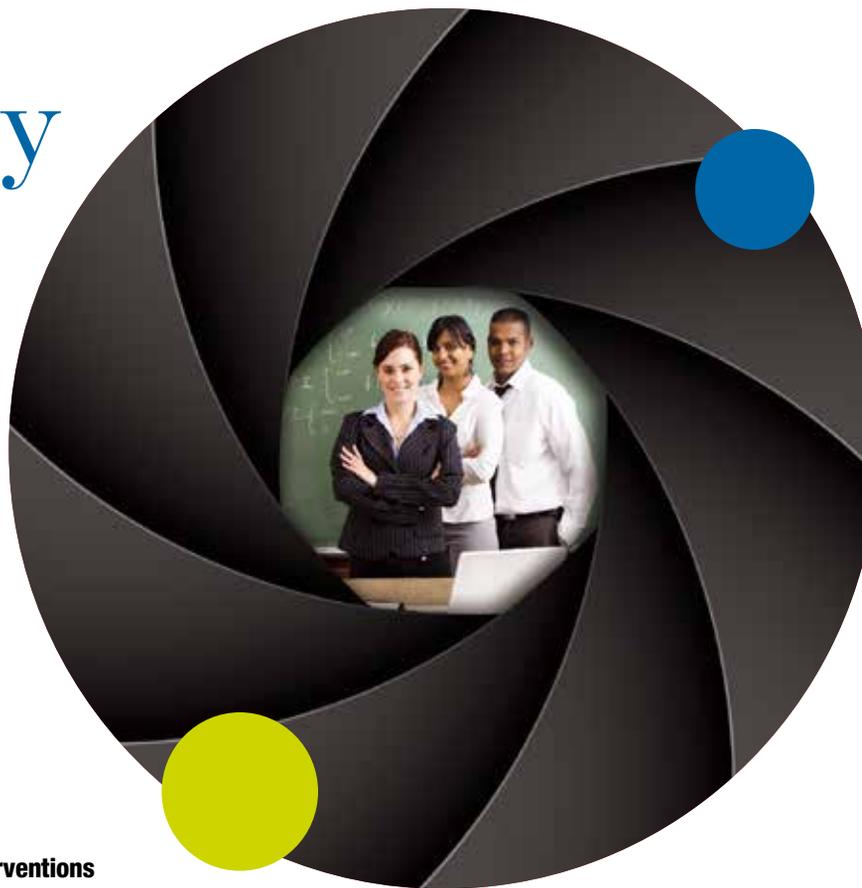


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Intellectually Engaging Leadership: Same Work, New Lens



By Davin Hildebrand

During the 2012-2013 school year, a group of principals in northern Saskatchewan took part in a research study focused on influencing teachers' intellectual engagement (Hildebrand, 2013). Principals designed and implemented interventions aimed at supporting teachers. The study was carried out using design-based research methodology and focused intently on the experience of the school principal.

The Challenge of Time

One of the initial concerns of the team of principals at the outset of the project was the amount of time that would be required to plan and actualize the interventions. Principals wondered how many actions they would be able to commit to given the many demands already placed on them. It would be rare to find a principal that does not have a perpetually self-renewing "To Do" list.

Participants in the study had a very clear idea of how busy they already were. Principals attempted to combat the evident lack of time by trying to weave the interventions into the work they were already doing. The group wondered if there might be things they were already doing that supported teachers' intellectual engagement and how closely new practices might fit with methods already in place.

Planned Interventions

The principals created an abundance of effective interventions that created opportunities for teachers to think deeply about their practice. The participants had a strong sense of self-efficacy in regard to the actions that were carried out. One of the principals carried out a book club over the five month duration of study. The theme of poverty was analyzed genuinely by all of the teachers in the school. A common language for understanding student challenges was developed.

Another principal led a series of collaborative conversations with teachers focused on developing school programming. These conversations started with a single meeting that gained enough momentum to catalyze continued conversations throughout the entire school year. Teachers not only had the opportunity to share their thoughts but also a chance to engage in leadership and create change.

A third principal coordinated a succession of teacher presentations on the theme of classroom management. The presentations led to innovative management practices in the school.

A fourth principal used a method of presenting teachers with a journal article and creating time, as well as an exciting format, during staff meetings to discuss the piece. The principal was able to address a number of timely topics and

support teachers' growth in a collaborative and enjoyable way.

A fifth principal organized a number of sharing opportunities where teachers would develop a particular area of expertise, which the principal would support with school resources and professional development opportunities, and present to the rest of the staff. This intervention nurtured intellectual engagement by moving the teacher from learner to expert and provided an opportunity to demonstrate this expertise to the rest of the staff. The group of principals devised numerous other planned interventions that had a significant effect on teachers' intellectual engagement.

Opportune Interventions

The group of principals also recognized that supporting teachers' intellectual engagement occurred at times that were not planned or foreseen by the principal. At these times, it was essential that the principal act. One principal was casually approached by a teacher who had an innovative program idea for the school. The principal recognized the opportunity and entered into a process of co-planning a proposal that was presented to the school superintendent with the hope of later presenting it to the Board of Education.

The principal identified a crucial moment to support a teachers' intellectual growth.

Another principal was approached by a teacher who was curious about what was involved with pursuing graduate work. The principal entered into a mentoring relationship with the teacher, identifying programs of interest, arranging meetings for the teacher with other individuals who recently completed graduate programs, connecting the teacher with relevant literature to peruse and, most importantly, sharing personal experience and insight. The process gave the teacher access to the support network that is critical when making difficult career choices.

A third principal appreciated the power of seizing the moment when an opportunity for an important conversation arose. At the end of a school day, a teacher approached the principal and wanted to talk about strategies for working with students in relationship to a book she had been reading. The principal entered into a meaningful conversation with the teacher about the book and the classroom. He continued to think about their words on the way home and for days to come in an effort to support her. The principal reflected that opportunities to engage often

arise in the moment and are rooted in the authentic work teachers are doing in classrooms.

By responding at critical times, principals in this study impacted teachers.

Same Work, New Lens

One of the key discoveries by the participants in this project was that the actions they took didn't necessarily require more time but rather looking through the lens of intellectually engaging leadership. Principals moved from a space of wondering if they would ever have time to do the interventions to infusing intellectually engaging leadership practices into their everyday work. The process was not about finding ways to do more but finding ways to do what you're doing in new ways.

A principal has a multitude of conversations every day with teachers. Do these conversations connect with the goals of the principal and build a culture of innovation and development? Principals run staff meetings regularly throughout the year. Do these meetings support the kind of school the principal is trying to create and provide opportunities for growth? Principals are in a

unique position to be able to act upon opportunities that present themselves in the school. Are these situations viewed as avenues to develop people and build a teaching staff of innovative leaders?

Evidently, principals have many things on their plates and are often working on multiple projects at once. The findings of this study challenge them not to do more but to consider what they are currently doing through a varied lens. ○

Davin Hildebrand is the principal of Jubilee Community School in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan which is part of the Northwest School Division. He is also a doctoral student at the University of Calgary, studying in the field of educational leadership.

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Life Balance at the Calgary Catholic School District

By John Deausy

The Calgary Catholic School District serves 50,000 students in 105 schools in Calgary, Alberta, and the surrounding area. As with all school districts, the issue of work-life balance has become an increasingly important area of focus as workloads and change initiatives seem to drive additional work. In addition,

As opposed to bringing in an outside speaker or expert, I offered a 75-minute interactive workshop. The response to the homegrown offering was overwhelming, with over half the district leaders selecting to attend the workshop on life balance, as opposed to other offerings.

The first part of the workshop was used to point out the two major flaws with the term “work-life balance.” First of all, the term suggests that work should come first, before your life, and second, that work and your life are mutually exclusive. The term *life balance* was offered as a superior alternative and better captured what people were trying to attain.

Life balance also suggests that there are many roles (leader, employee, parent, spouse, individual, volunteer, caregiver, etc.) in our lives to balance and different time-frames over which we are trying to achieve balance. As principals and district leaders, an obvious priority on career or work was at some point made, consciously or unconsciously. It was also pointed out the balance looks different for everyone and one person’s balance could look completely imbalanced to the next person.

The life balance workshop has been offered twice over the course of the school year to approximately 150 principals, instructional and non-instructional leaders. Each participant was asked to anonymously rate their satisfaction with their life balance, with 10 being perfectly balanced and one being completely out of control. Interestingly, the average was just slightly over six, with a range from three to nine. The district and our leaders have some work to do relative to life balance.

The workshop covered the area of time management or life balance systems, based on *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*,

by Steven Covey; *18 Minutes*, by Peter Bregman; *Getting Things Done*, and *Making It All Work*, by David Allen; and through discussion and interaction with fellow participants. In short, most systems involve keeping lists of things-to-do and prioritizing the list. One of the lists that was pointed out as being equally important was a things-NOT-to-do list, to ensure priorities are kept.

The workshop also introduced the concept of energy management versus time management, based on the work of Tony Schwartz (*Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time* – Harvard Business Review and www.theenergyproject.com), where physical (sleep and nutrition); mental (focus from prioritization and minimizing interruptions); emotional (feeling valued and appreciated); and spiritual (deeply held values and a clear sense of purpose) energy need to be managed and nurtured to ensure leaders are productive and balanced.

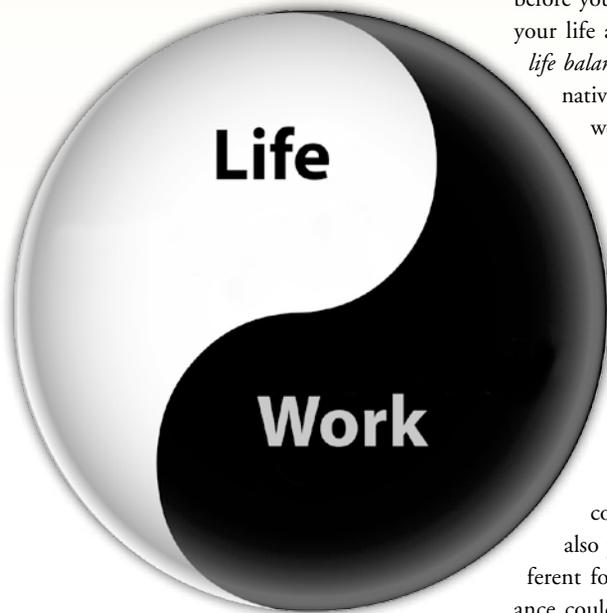
In particular, the workshop focused on two specific challenges to balance:

- Email; and
- Meetings.

The workshop addressed some basic strategies on processing email and running effective meetings. Interestingly, these two challenges to life balance have become a recurring theme within the district.

The workshop succeeded in getting district staff to begin talking about life balance, what it looks like and some of the barriers to achieving it. It also provided district leaders with an opportunity to consider their own life balance and some strategies to implement or improve it. Finally, it provided the district’s leadership with some organizational actions that could be taken.

The second initiative undertaken by the district was a focus group, spearheaded by Mike Ross, Superintendent, Area D Schools, and six of the district’s 105 principals. This group’s original mandate was to look at school start-up issues but its work became more about overall life balance issues. This



technology makes people more available and able to work from anywhere.

During the 2012-2013 school year, the Calgary Catholic School District embarked on two homegrown initiatives to address the issue of work-life balance. Although both initiatives started small, they have had an impact district-wide.

The first initiative was to offer a workshop to principals and leaders at the district’s Fall Leadership Conference, in October 2012. Feedback from the previous year’s conference had indicated that a workshop on work-life balance was desired by many participants.

group collected feedback at the same Leadership Conference, related to what was working and not working in the district. The feedback was collated and coincidentally, the two themes that emerged as barriers to a leader's productivity and life balance were:

- Email; and
- Meetings;

The focus group looked at the issues involved with each of these common themes and came up with proposed recommendations that the district are now implementing or have implemented.

Email

District leaders identified email as one of the biggest challenges to life balance. The significant volume of email, the high volume of requests for information through email and poor email communication were highlighted as challenges that led to tasks being lost or not completed, and misunderstanding and confusion.

In response to these issues, the district is addressing the problem by publishing an email etiquette document for all staff members. This document addresses appropriate and inappropriate usage of email. It is hoped that by having a common email etiquette document, that communication will improve. Also, the district is endeavoring to offer short (15-minute) training sessions on Microsoft Outlook as part of district leadership meetings to ensure district leaders know how to use email technology efficiently and effectively. The implementation of a common standard or etiquette and improved professional development are already reducing email volume and improving communication.

First of all, the term suggests that work should come first, before your life, and second, that work and your life are mutually exclusive. The term life balance was offered as a superior alternative and better captured what people were trying to attain.

Meetings

District leaders need to be well informed about many topics and meetings are a valuable and useful tool for informing people. District leaders identified some meetings as not effective, based on time of year, length and other factors. This issue becomes very important during school start up in September. In addition, time out of schools for meetings can be significant, leading to time away from students.

In response to the feedback, the coordination of district administration meetings was looked at for the balance of the year. Where possible, September meetings were reduced and the use of technology was tested as an alternative to face-to-face meetings to minimize a principal's need to be out of their school.

In addition, guidelines for running effective meetings are being widely distributed to ensure good meeting practices are being followed. Additionally, the guidelines remind each meeting participant that they all have a shared responsibility to make a meeting work by being engaged and prepared to contribute, and that each person should monitor their own actions as participants in a meeting.

These simple steps of improved co-ordination and a focus on running effective meetings are reducing the amount of time that district leaders are away from their workplaces.

The recognition of the importance of life balance and the challenges to life balance have been a focus at the Calgary Catholic School District this year. In response to feedback from district leaders, simple steps are being taken to address the issue of life balance, both from an individual and an organizational level.

Life balance is not easily achieved but by getting feedback from district leaders and making small changes to personal and organizational practice, positive changes in life balance are occurring within the district. Continued work and effort on improved life balance for district leaders and staff will result in improved instructional leadership and student learning, which is the ultimate balance we want to achieve. ○

John Deaussy is the Superintendent, Finance and Business of the Calgary Catholic School District, a husband, father of two young sons, and is continuing to seek improved life balance.



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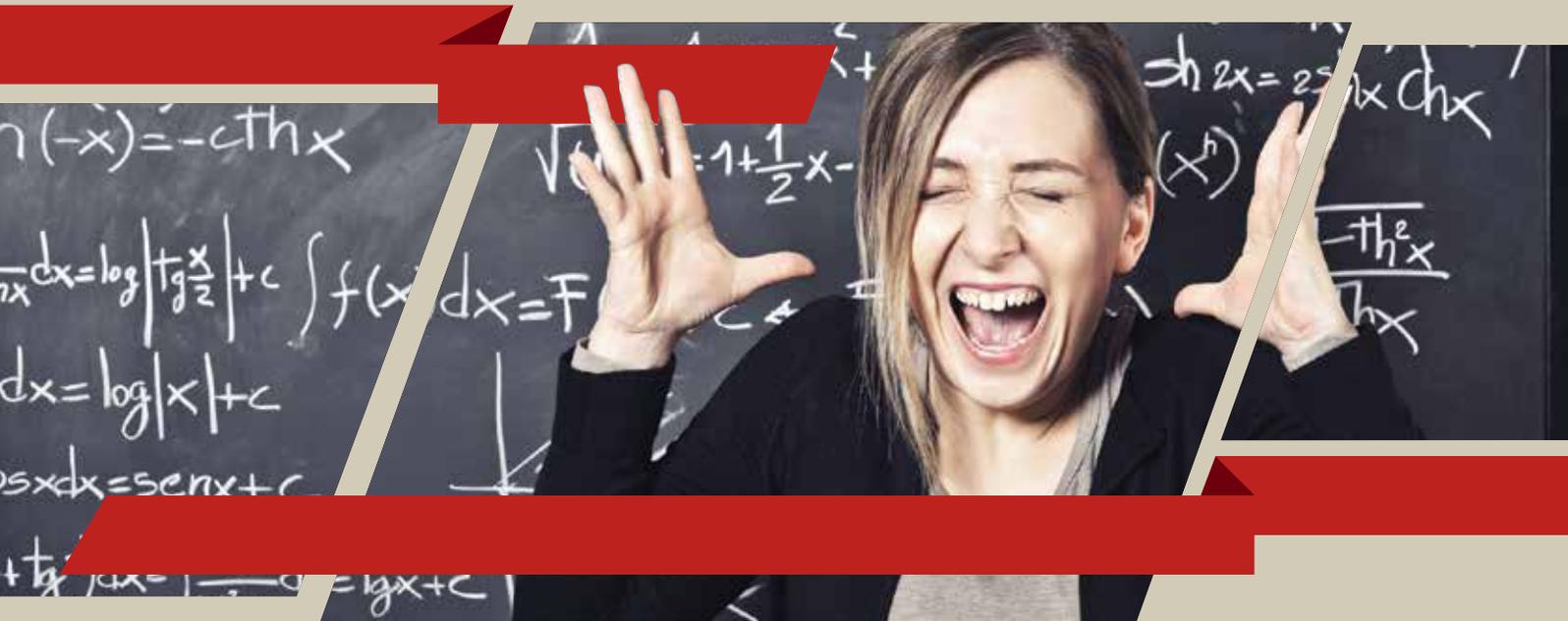
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Under Pressure: Educators and Compassion Fatigue

By Katherine Léger, Melanie Ferdinand and Dr. Michelle Gilpin



The Thames Valley District School Board (TVSDB) is recognized in Ontario as one of the provincial pioneers in the development of a school board mental health strategic plan. The purpose of the TVDSB Mental Health Strategic Plan is to promote mental well-being in order to enable student success, with a vision that every school will be a mentally healthy school. Through a collaborative engagement process with staff, students, parents and community stakeholders, three strategic goals were developed: fostering stigma-free learning environments, building staff capacity and promoting mental health and wellness. Now, well into the third year of a five year plan, our work has focussed on identifying and implementing strategies to meet these goals.

As our work has progressed, it has become increasingly apparent that it is essential not only to focus on student health but to also address mental health and well-being for staff within our educational system. One of the strategies developed to meet this need has been the implementation of a number of workshops for staff on the topic of compassion fatigue.

The term compassion fatigue was first coined by Charles Figley in 1995, to describe the profound emotional and physical exhaustion that caregivers and helping professionals can experience during their career.

It is important to recognize that compassion fatigue is distinctly different from work related stress. Work related stress can impact any profession in the workforce and can stem from a variety of

sources, whereas compassion fatigue only occurs in helping professions and is directly related to the interactions that occur during the helping process. Those entering a helping profession typically display compassion and empathy towards others, which helps them do their job effectively. Over time, however, that compassion can become depleted resulting in significant decreases in hope and empathy with respect to students as well as one's own self-care.

Unfortunately, there is a pervasive myth that compassion fatigue impacts only those who are not strong or capable. In reality, this is a problem, "That affects those who do their work well" (Figley, 1995)* and are the most compassionate and able to connect with their clients.

As helping professionals, educators are at increased risk for developing compassion fatigue. They are faced with a high volume of work, increasing demand to do more with dwindling resources, a lack of time to debrief with colleagues, potential isolation due to class/school schedules, students who present with motivational conflicts, as well as system and political pressures.

Arguably, one of the greatest challenges faced by educators is the lack of training to cope with the growing epidemic of mental health, trauma and psychosocial challenges that exist in our schools and impact students' ability to learn. In dealing with a growing number of high risk students and families, staff members are exposed to crisis and trauma on a regular basis. This may be best demonstrated by examples shared by our staff:

- A teacher has assigned students to write an essay reflecting on themes in a novel and connecting it back to their personal

experience. A student hands in an essay in which she describes being sexually assaulted and its impact on her.

- An administrator is notified that a fight is occurring in the hall. She intervenes and places herself at physical risk in doing so. She then spends the rest of the afternoon dealing with the fallout, speaking with students, angry parents and the police.
- While supervising lunch break, an Educational Assistant (EA) notices that when a child raises his arm to throw a ball, his sleeve slides down, revealing bruises. When the EA asks him about it, he discloses that he “makes” his dad angry sometimes. The child tells the EA details about the incident. The EA then calls child welfare authorities and files a report.
- A student has missed over a week of class. When the teacher approaches him, he discloses that he was kicked out of his house and has been sleeping on a park bench.
- A teacher calls home to discuss a poor grade with a student’s parents and is told about multiple problems that are occurring at home. Despite this, the teacher is eventually blamed for their child’s poor grade and she is told that the reason their child is not being successful is that her teaching skills are poor.

The reality is that these types of situations happen frequently and can have an enormous personal impact on our educators. While exposure to these events may be inevitable, educators fortunately do have control over how they cope with challenging information, how they implement self-care, and the degree to which they are informed about the risks of the helping profession.

To help our staff gain an awareness of compassion fatigue, professional development sessions were offered, focussing on

understanding the definition of compassion fatigue and its related constructs, related risk factors and warning signs. In these workshops, particular attention was paid to reducing stigma and encouraging open dialogue about the personal challenges educators face on a daily basis. Finally, there was a strong emphasis on practical prevention strategies and coping skills to encourage staff to prioritize their own self-care.

Many of the sessions were held outside the normal work day, with staff attending voluntarily on their own time. The response to these workshops has been overwhelmingly positive. Qualitative data indicated that staff identified with feelings of isolation and stigma, and that the opportunity to explore their experiences resulted in feelings of validation. Following the workshops, staff requested more information and a forum to dialogue about challenges and self-care.

Based on this feedback, plans are now underway to develop a multi-part compassion fatigue workshop that will specifically focus on self-care and life balance in smaller group settings. The goal for these smaller, focused workshops will be for participants to leave with an individualized plan to assist them in implementing and monitoring their own self-care strategies. Follow up sessions will occur later in the school year to check in on the participant’s personal progress, to assist in making modifications and to encourage staff to re-commit to increased self-care and life balance.

In all, these efforts align with our school board’s mental health strategic goal of building staff capacity through increasing awareness and management of compassion fatigue concerns. As we become

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increasingly cognizant of the mental health needs of our students, we cannot ignore the impact and issues faced by our educators. Our vision for mentally healthy learning environments includes everyone. ○

Katherine Léger, M.Ed (Counselling), CCC, is a School Support Counsellor working with high risk youth in the TVDSB alternative schools. She is a certified compassion fatigue specialist/therapist. Prior to joining the Board, she worked for various addiction, domestic violence and mental health programs.

Melanie Ferdinand, MSW, RSW is currently the Coordinator of School Counselling and Social Work Services for the TVDSB. She has over 25 years of experience specializing in counseling and programming interventions for youth "in risk."

Dr. Michelle Gilpin, C. Psych, is a registered psychologist in both School and Rehabilitation Psychology, and has over 20 years of experience in both school and rehabilitation psychology. Currently, she is the Mental Health Project Lead for the Thames Valley District School Board.

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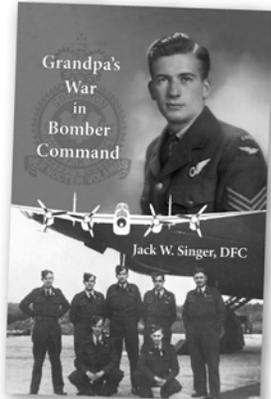




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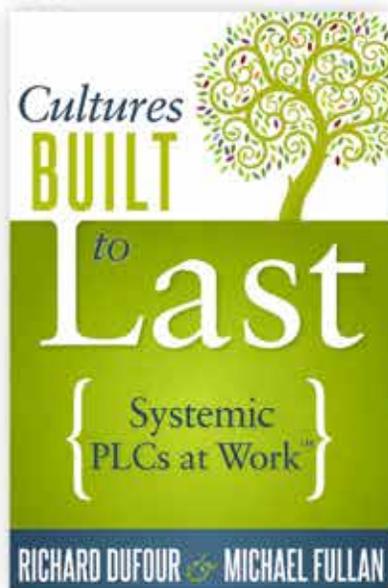
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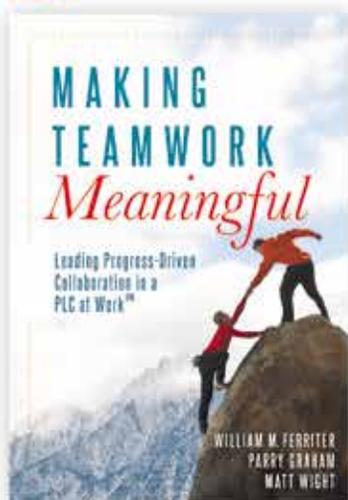
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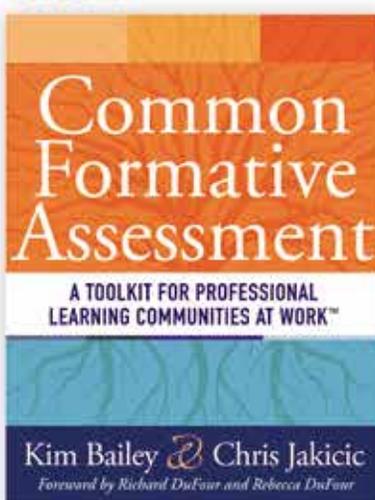


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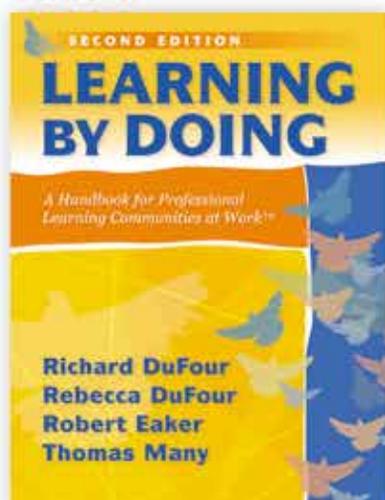
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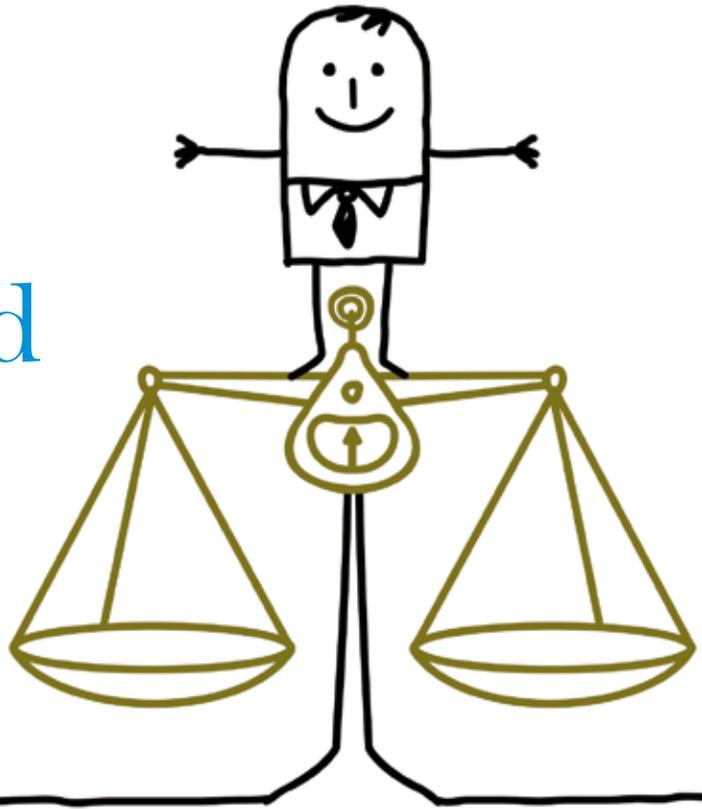


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Wellness for All Helps Teachers and Students Strike a Balance



By Jackie Bajus and Meg Petkoff

Achieving balance in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board is more about discovering your “wellness geography” than figuring out how to divide your time between the significant demands of work and home. It is about learning to set boundaries but, more so, it’s about identifying what it is that makes you feel fulfilled spiritually, physically, intellectually and emotionally. It is about taking responsibility for your own, individual “well-being” and “owning that geography” or space.

For the adults in our system, we know that in order to be truly effective at what they do, they need to first be as “centered” as feasible. For our students, the same is true. In order for them to absorb as much as they can from their educational experience, they, too, must be focused and understand how to address those issues and situations that compete for their attention. Our goal is to assist all people within our organization to live a healthy life in which their values and actions align and they find fulfillment in their days.

Our “Wellness for All” philosophy, programs and initiatives for staff and students operate on parallel tracks. With the enthusiastic endorsement of the Director and Sr. Administration Team, the Superintendent of Education and Respectful Workplace Coordinator collaborate to promote programs, activities, services and opportunities for staff and students in which to participate with the goal of educating them about ideas, strategies and activities to promote wellness.

Our goals include supporting the staff in assisting them at whatever points they are at in their lives and careers to find that place of “personal wellness”, and our goals for our students include educating them not only to identify when they are stressed but to adopt healthy practices for dealing with their stress.

Additionally, our goals for staff and students alike include developing resiliency (their personal “wellness geography”) and encouraging them to reach out to provide support to others in need, as well as to feel comfortable to seek that assistance for themselves.

Ideas to Action

What we know, by the ever increasing reports of research on worker effectiveness, productivity and job satisfaction, is that there is a “business case” as well as “personal case” to be made for addressing “wellness.” We have seen the increase in absenteeism related to stress and associated medical conditions (anxiety, depression, heart, blood pressure, diabetes, etc.) and we have also witnessed its impact on workers who don’t stay home, “presenteeism,” causing diminished performance, productivity and civility.

Not only are we called to address these issues and concerns, but we need to assist employees and students in taking responsibility for making their personal health and wellness their number one priority. In turn, they will become engaged employees and students who are able to find that balance.

Betsy Jacobson (personal and corporate coach and change agent) advocates that, “Balance is not better time management but better boundary management. Balance means making choices and enjoying those choices.” We are providing opportunities for employees and students to check in with themselves and

make sure they are making healthy choices, consistent with their wellness.

We are asking them to identify their values and to ensure that their activities align with those values. We asked them to come forward with their needs and ideas. Everyone is different, therefore, the importance of personal “wellness geographies” is important, as is their feedback in terms of how they need to be supported.

Out of our request for input, came the proposal that we strike a committee to look specifically at “Mental Health at Work.” All employee groups identified this area as one in which they required additional information and training. In response, a system Professional Development Day in 2010 was planned and delivered, representing our Board’s “kick off” in terms of our dedication to developing and executing a Mental Health at Work Strategy. This day focused on providing staff with information regarding their own mental wellness, including when to consult with their medical practitioner or EAP provider if they have concerns regarding their own mental health status. The fact that everyone has challenges in their lives, which produce symptoms of mental un-wellness at times, was presented as “normal” and employees were encouraged to seek the support they need when they need it.

To address all areas of “wellness”, an internal Board website was established to provide sources of articles, presentations and contacts, and encourage employee contributions. A Mental Health at Work Committee was established, encouraging the participation and collaboration of all employee group representatives.

Based on this model, and the successful achievement of the “Performance Excellence” benchmarks for Levels 1 and 2, the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board was recently recognized with the Level II Award from Excellence Canada for its achievement and acknowledged as the first school board in Canada to implement a Mental Health at Work program. The goals (consistent with the recently released Psychologically Safe Workplace standards) of the workplace program include collecting data, reducing stigma, raising awareness and sensitivity regarding mental health matters, educating employees about signs and symptoms of mental health concerns, and assisting those in management positions to understand their role in working with employees requiring support.

Supporting Staff Wellness

From a prevention perspective, opportunities for employees to participate in activities to assist them in supporting their “wellness” were provided during both after hours sessions as well as on Professional Development days. This includes the month of April, which has been dedicated to employee wellness. Last year we provided workshops for staff, including: nutrition and food choices, care for the caregiver, mindfulness and stress reduction. This year we had a slate of workshops, including meditation and mindfulness, meditation in movement, vision boarding, laughter yoga and financial wellness. We offer refreshments, door prizes and an opportunity to learn.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, including comments such as: “This was so peaceful...just what I needed. I will be able to use these breathing techniques and they really helped.” Another includes: “My doctor has been encouraging me to do meditation to deal with stress. I learned what that meant today. I’m so thankful my employer was the first to offer me the opportunity to experience it.”

Supporting Student Wellness

Looking at mental well-being for students resulted in a conscientious decision to invest in child-centred and interactive, meaningful engagements rather than expensive commercial products. A significant focus of these programs has been that the goal is to educate and support the students to be “witness” to their faith and beliefs and to teach or coach

them as to what that witness looks like in the interactions and relationships they have with their peers.

Throughout the Board, students are engaged in student leadership activities, including peer-to-peer awareness training about mental health, bullying prevention and intervention programs, respecting diversity and making healthy nutrition choices. Several school teams have won local and provincial recognition for their work. At the elementary and secondary levels, the six pillars of wellness are reinforced through the collaboration with Public Health, social workers, Catholic School Councils and supported by access to a wellness facilitator. All of the initiatives are connected to our Catholic faith and teachings.

Invariably, the culture of each school or work site around mental well-being and the relationships among staff and students are linked to the leadership skills and philosophy of the on-site supervisor and his/her role as an advocate for healthy physical, emotional or spiritual well-being. As we work through this project and identify additional needs, ongoing training for Board leaders will continue to be provided. Through this model of caring for the “whole person”, the movement towards a healthier learning and working environment is progressing towards “Wellness for All.” ○

Jackie Bajus is a Superintendent of Education, and Meg Petkoff is the Respectful Workplace Advisor for the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board.

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Mentorship and Professional Development Empowers New Teachers

By Dawn Sugimoto

When elementary teacher Shantel Mohrmann says she feels like she's been teaching longer than her two years, it's not that she's feeling weary. "I'm a lot more confident and aware and a lot more sure of myself," she says.

She credits this unexpected comfort level to the support she's received through Palliser Regional Schools' beginning teacher induction program, which provides mentorship and professional development to teachers through their first three years in the profession.

In her first year, Mohrmann was matched with a mentor and provided workshops on classroom management. In Year 2, the program gave teachers opportunity to collaborate on unit planning and resource development. Next year, she and her fellow third-year teachers will learn The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen R. Covey's program that's as much about home life as it is about work.

"I have a couple of friends teaching who don't have any sort of induction programs and it's a lot different for them. They're still wondering, 'Am I doing this OK?'" Mohrmann says. "Now that I have that first year under my belt, I know what to expect... I never feel like I'm drowning. "It makes the rest of my life a little easier."

Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger says Palliser's approach of supporting student learning through a nurtured culture of satisfied employees is ripped from the pages of Al Stubblefield's 2005 book *Baptist Health Care Journey to Excellence: Creating a Culture that WOWs!* Stubblefield describes how the corporation reversed poor patient satisfaction ratings and moribund staff morale through employee support and empowerment.

Palliser introduced its beginning teacher induction program in 2007. An Administrators' Induction and Mentorship (AIM) program to support principals and vice-principals through their first two years was introduced in



From left, second-year Palliser teachers Mandy Reimer and Shantel Mohrmann look at an online resource during a workshop on lesson planning as part of their second-year beginning teacher induction and mentorship program.

2009-2010. A Lead Teacher Cohort followed in 2011-2012 for teachers who self-identify and show promise as future school leaders.

Palliser Superintendent Kevin Gietz says it's no coincidence results have improved as employee supports have grown. Palliser now performs above provincial average in every category measured by Alberta Education, whether provincial test results, parent satisfaction surveys or high school completion. For professionals passionate about student learning, the expectation and subsequent delivery of excellent results motivates and exhilarates, Gietz says.

About 100 third-year teachers and second-year administrators have taken the Seven Habits workshop, led by Garinger and other Palliser staff who are certified facilitators so far.

"We're telling our staff we're committed to them," Garinger says. "We want you to be an effective teacher but more than that, we want you to be the most effective spouse, effective mentor, whatever it might be."

Looking at photos of induction groups over the years, Garinger can count on one hand the number of teachers who've left the profession.

In addition to induction programs, Palliser devotes four days a year to division-wide teacher collaboration. This self-directed PD brings together colleagues who share a grade level, a subject or an area of interest, such as literacy. These small learning teams focus on a goal intended to directly impact student learning, then share their results in a divisional showcase.

The work builds bridges across a diverse division that has large urban schools and small rural ones scattered across more than 250 kilometres of southern Alberta.

"It's critical to have that sense of community," Garinger says. "I might be the only Grade 6 math teacher in my building but I can be working with other Grade 6 teachers across the division. Allowing teachers to really take ownership of that professional development has been critical to our system's success."

Surveys find participants overwhelmingly support these programs. A survey of teachers following a division-wide PD day in October 2012 found 97 per cent said their collaborative group would have a positive impact on students.

The sharing, collaboration and supports reflect a workplace culture markedly changed from the days when senior leadership was feared and teachers were overtly territorial and protective of their resources, says Shannon Collier, a high school vice-principal and 15-year Palliser teacher.

"We have that open communication," she says. "We're not afraid to say, 'this is something new to me.' It's OK to say, 'I could use some help.'"

When Collier experienced difficulties on the job, she'd feel that stress creeping in at home. She says challenging times made her all the more appreciative of the mentorship and assistance she found in coworkers, other administrators and Central Office staff.

"Palliser wants its teachers to be successful. I've really appreciated that." ○

Dawn Sugimoto is the Communications Officer for Palliser Regional Schools. Before joining Palliser in 2009, she spent 20 years in journalism.



SPECIAL FOCUS



The Health Journey Continues at Northern Lights School Division!

By H el ene Serbu and Ron Taylor

Imagine a school division where:

- Health has become a part of the every-day work week.
- Health activities are initiated by staff, occur regularly and have been sustained since 2008.
- Many individuals continually improve their health status and continue to reduce, eliminate or delay the onset of chronic diseases.
- Everyone is invited to contribute individually or with others to make health happen.

In 2008, Northern Lights School Division and the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan were each seeking a strategy and partner with whom to implement a Healthy Living Program. Following initial meetings, a journey to execute a one-of-a-kind program began. The following key steps were instrumental in ensuring a successful journey.

Obtaining Active Support from Senior Leaders and Trustees

While health is a shared responsibility with employees, an investment of time and money was required from the school division. In order for employees to feel supported in the voluntary participation of the program, Board, division administration and employee group support was imperative. Key to overcoming significant barriers and challenges necessitated the creation of a Steering Committee to provide high level direction and support.

Involve all Employee Groups

While leadership support paved the way, each person chose to assume responsibility for their health. The framework for the Healthy Living Program was defined and fully customized to meet the interests and needs of the division. A Working Committee, representing all employee groups and geographic regions, was created to develop the orientation for the program, gather input from colleagues and address questions/concerns. They became outstanding ambassadors and role models for the program from year to year.

By involving the entire district in health, it became easier for each person to maintain or keep their healthy lifestyle choices.

Make Health a Way of Being, not an Event

Wanting to be healthy and taking sustained action over time to get healthy and stay healthy are very different. It was easy to introduce the concept of health; most people wanted to do this. By involving the entire district in health, it became easier for each person to maintain or keep their healthy lifestyle choices.

As health became part of the “way we work in Northern Lights”, positive health influences were seen in our day-to-day work, including choosing healthy foods for all-day meetings; adding “health activities” as a standing agenda item at staff meetings; and making “health” a thread through all aspects of our welcome back “System Day.” Volunteer Site Coordinators were created to facilitate these health actions at every division location. They involved their colleagues in identifying actions and activities for the groups to participate in each month. New activities were introduced monthly to keep the interest and energy high.

The initial steps taken for program implementation was to have a Registered Nurse provide a complete lipid screen (HDL, LDL, blood glucose, triglycerides) to interested employees. These afforded insights into health that are otherwise invisible until symptoms appear. Combined with an online health assessment and access to a health coach, individuals were able to see their personal health profile and receive information about low, moderate and high risk areas of their health. This proved to be powerful for many employees who were able to take action to improve specific health risks.

Recently, ASEBP provided all employees the opportunity to participate in a Chronic Disease Prevention Clinic utilizing the Inbody 230 Body Composition Analyzer. This was a non-invasive way to measure values, such as weight, dry lean mass, water weight, skeletal muscle mass, body fat mass, percentage body fat, body mass index and segmental lean analysis through electrical impedance. This, partnered with 15 minute sessions with health professionals, provided employees with fresh insight toward healthy living. In six months’ time, employees will have the occasion to review the success of initiated lifestyle changes as ASEBP will be returning with the Inbody 230 Analyzer.

Individuals learn from one another and are encouraged by one another. Today, employees continue to organize successful school, area or division-wide health activities. Creating a focus on health required commitment, passion, time, resources and money. While a budget was required, the value obtained has been significant. The primary benefit has been the improved physical and mental health of our employees. We also experienced a decrease in the cost of benefits and the surcharge position has now been removed.

By celebrating individual and team success and initiatives, staff have found encouragement on those days when making health happen feels more challenging. Northern Lights School Division is proud to support making health happen! ○

H el ene Serbu, RN, was involved in the implementations of the Healthy Living health assessments. Ron Taylor, Associate Superintendent, Human Resources, NLSLD, is the overseer of the Healthy Living Program.

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Efficiency in the Workplace: How Knowledge Mobilization Can Help Life Balance

By Jayme Herman, Christie Fraser, Susan Elgie and Ruth Childs

School board administrators are responsible for making decisions that directly affect students' and teachers' well-being. Basing those decisions on evidence is important but the amount of evidence can be overwhelming and reaching a decision when different sources of evidence suggest different directions can be stressful. When professional life is burdened with this type of stress, the balance between personal and professional life can be compromised. Key to improving life balance is better and quicker decision-making. A strategy for optimizing knowledge mobilization can help administrators make effective and efficient evidence-based decisions.

What is Knowledge Mobilization?

Knowledge mobilization is the process of taking existing knowledge and making it useful. The knowledge mobilization process can support sound—and timely—decision making based on thoughtful synthesis of information and expertise from multiple sources.¹

The Evaluating Evidence about Educational Practices (EEEP) approach facilitates knowledge mobilization. The EEEP approach was developed by researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), in collaboration with members of the Association of Educational Researchers of Ontario (AERO), for use by decision makers in the field of education. The EEEP approach outlines three steps for finding, assessing and synthesizing evidence and suggests three criteria for decision-makers to use when considering each piece of evidence: effectiveness, equity and efficiency.

Step one is searching broadly for evidence related to a topic of interest. Some educators may think of research as being the most important form of evidence, but,

in practice, professional opinion, anecdotes and journalism can be as important. For example, evidence from a research article might tell you if an educational program or practice is more helpful for one group of students than for another, and evidence from a teacher's personal experiences with that program or practice might let you know whether it is viable in a particular educational context.

Step two is to determine the quality of the evidence. To do that, evidence is first categorized into three types: research studies; professional opinion; and media, journalism and anecdotes. The EEEP handbook provides a series of criteria for each type of evidence. For example, when assessing the relevance and credibility of professional opinion, it is important to consider the following criteria:

1. There is evidence of expertise from the individual's degrees or other formal qualifications.
2. The expert's record shows skill, experience and/or publication in the field.
3. The expert's knowledge is up-to-date.
4. The scope of the question at hand is within or mostly within the expert's field.
5. The expert's opinion was clear.
6. The opinion was given directly rather than quoted.
7. The opinion was given in the framework of a professional relationship.
8. The opinion is consistent with knowledge in the field, or if not, the expert explains why it is not.
9. The expert is personally reliable: honest, conscientious, and not biased.

Step three involves synthesizing the best quality evidence in relation to the three values of effectiveness, equity and efficiency. Different sources of evidence may be relevant for each of these values. What is most important is to consider what evidence is relevant for each of the values and whether there is sufficient evidence, of sufficient quality, to support the decision.

This knowledge mobilization approach is intended to allow school board administrators to take existing information or evidence and use it to make well-supported decisions. The approach can provide a shared framework for discussions between administrators and school board researchers and others who may support administrators in finding, assessing and synthesizing evidence.

Conclusion

Having a knowledge mobilization process in the workplace can improve life balance by reducing some of the stress caused by the multitude of high stakes decisions a school board administrator must make.

For More Information

More information about evaluating educational practices, including a detailed handbook, can be found at www.aero-aocce.org/eeep.html. Development of that website and refinement of the framework were funded by Ontario's Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research (KNAER). ○

Jayme Herman and Christie Fraser are PhD candidates in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. Susan Elgie is a consultant specializing in social research methods. Ruth Childs is an Associate Professor in OISE's Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education.

Footnote

1. Dr. Kathy Witherow provided a very useful presentation of knowledge mobilization in the Winter 2012-2013 *Leaders & Learners*: Knowledge mobilization as a lever for change, page 37.



Striking a Balance: Improving Student Achievement and Wellness through Restorative Justice Practices

By Anna Boyle, Tracey Brown, Flora Nordoff, Michael Mielko and Josie Zuppa

At its core, the purpose of Restorative Justice (RJ) Practices is to teach students and adults strategies for repairing relationships, while focusing on personal accountability and feeling connected to the school community. In his book, *Building and Restoring Respectful Relationships in Schools*, Hendry (2009) states that: “Restorative practice is a way of working with children that acknowledges the central importance of effective relationships in schools and promotes the school’s role in developing these. It places particular emphasis on developing respect, empathy, social responsibility and self-regulation. Proactive approaches build emotional intelligence and resilience.” (Hendry, p.6)

Through Restorative Justice Practice, students are able to strike a balance between wellness and student achievement. HWCDSB schools have reported significant improvement in the areas of student engagement, motivation and achievement. Although we are in the early stages of full implementation we have seen a definite decrease in suspensions and, conversely, an increase in positive relationships amongst students, staff and parents. The aforementioned outcomes of RJ practice have allowed us to comprehensively examine and understand students’ negative behaviour in order to better address the crux of the respective problem. In our experience as administrators, student suspensions only serve to further isolate children and do not provide them with a sense of belonging to the school community.

RJ practice fosters positive and respectful environments that nurture spiritual-based teaching. In these contexts, students feel a heightened sense of belonging to the community, staffs are united by a common

language and parents feel connected to the school community.

Consider the following:

- Student leaders who have been trained in RJ have reported a significant difference in how they successfully manage conflict amongst their peers.
- Teachers notice conversations with students are more meaningful because traditional questioning tends to illicit a defensive response, whereas restorative language is neutral, un-accusing and supportive of all parties. School personnel are equipped with the capacity to “listen more attentively and empathetically, and to question and respond with greater compassion and consistency.” (Jackie Bajus, Superintendent of Education, HWCDSB)
- Parents report their approval of our focus on repairing relationships instead of resorting to punitive measures. Parents also cite their satisfaction with arriving at solutions with all parties involved in the respective issues. As stakeholders, parents need to be informed of RJ practices; involving parents will lead to consistency between the home and school community.

In order to create a common restorative Catholic culture we implemented Restorative Practices in the following way:

1. Flora Nordoff and Josie Zuppa became Lead Trainers of RJ across the HWCDSB and piloted the practices at their school.
2. They trained staff at seven different schools.
3. Fifteen champions were chosen amongst the trainees and invited as core members of the HWCDSB Restorative Justice Sustainability Committee (RJSC).
4. Each school selected a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), administrator and one teacher to be trained.

5. RJSC met to discuss how to best sustain RJ practices and continue the training. A sub-committee formed to develop a training kit.
6. Student leaders in RJ were trained in several elementary and secondary schools.
7. Educational assistants, social workers and behaviour resource teams were also trained in RJ practices.
8. Information sessions were delivered to Catholic School Councils, School Improvement Teams, Board administrators, as well as the New Teacher Induction Program.

Patricia Amos, Director of the HWCDS has stated that, “The premise of RJ is in full alignment with our beliefs as a Catholic school system. RJ helps guide our youth to help them feel empowered, rather than powerless victims.” (2012, personal commentary) With her vision and support, the implementation of RJ practices has enhanced our culture of empathy and forgiveness.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another; forgive each other, just as Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32 ○

Flora Nordoff, Principal of St. Matthew Catholic Elementary School (CES) and Josie Zuppa, Special Education Resource Teacher at St. Matthew CES, for the past five years have lead the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board in developing the restorative culture throughout the school system as Lead Trainers of Restorative Justice. Tracey Brown, SERT at St. Vincent de Paul CES, Anna Boyle, SERT at St. Marguerite D’Youville CES, and Michael Mielko, Vice-Principal at St. Mark CES, joined the restorative justice sustainability team in 2010, and along with Flora and Josie co-authored the Restorative Justice training kit.



SPECIAL FOCUS



HWDSB's John Leyzer is one of Canada's Outstanding Principals

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) Principal of Organizational Leadership, John Leyzer, received top honours in his field when he was named one of Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2013.

The Learning Partnership, a national charitable organization that champions public education, named Leyzer among the 51 principals across Canada to be honoured this year for their unique and crucial contributions to K-12 public education. It means he has made a measurable difference in the lives of students and communities.

"This prestigious award recognizes the work that John does for our schools and our system, to increase student achievement and to engage our students, staff and communities," said Associate Director of Education, Ken Bain, who nominated Leyzer. "As a Board, we are so proud of John for receiving this honour."

In its nine-year history, the Canada's Outstanding Principals program has given 260 recipients the honour. Leyzer joins a growing list of HWDSB winners that also includes Judy Langsner and Rick Hart (2012), Elaine Pilgrim-Susi (2011), Wes Hahn (2010), Bob Morrall (2008), Peter Joshua (2007), Pat Rocco (2006), Scott Sincerbox (2006) and Scott Lowrey (2005).

"We are thrilled to be recognizing these individuals as examples of excellence in public education," said Akela Peoples, President and CEO of The Learning Partnership. "These school CEOs communicate compelling visions, engage their communities, mentor their staff and, most importantly, create safe and nurturing learning environments for students."

Leaders & Learners Back Issues

Did you know you can read back issues of *Leaders & Learners* online? Go to www.casa-acas.ca to download all issues available.



Annual Conference Success

The Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec and the Quebec School Boards Association held its annual spring conference May 30 to June 1, 2013, in St. Sauveur, Quebec. This professional development activity brought together educational leaders and school board commissioners from the English School Boards across Quebec. Keynote speakers included Erin Gruwell, whose remarkable story was featured in the Academy Award nominated film, "The Freedom Fighters"; Roger Garriock, from, "Destination ImagiNation"; and Wendy Mesley, CBC news anchor and journalist.

Northwest Territories Superintendents Association (NWTSA) Strengthens Relations with CASA

The NWTSA appreciates the benefits of membership in CASA and the various ways in which CASA provides opportunities for NWTSA member networking, with exemplary school system education leaders from across Canada; the annual CASA Conference and the *Leaders & Learners* publications as examples.

We are proud to say that NWTSA representative and South Slave Divisional Education Council superintendent, Dr. Curtis Brown, returned from the recent CASA planning session (in January 2013) speaking positively about the opportunity provided through facilitated sessions to meet and learn with others as they reconsidered CASA's purpose, governing structure, constitution and the beginnings of a new CASA strategic plan. That meeting has since prompted NWTSA to review its own Constitution, which has resulted in revisions to increase NWTSA and CASA membership to include NWT school board assistant superintendents and supervisors of schools, and to make more explicit the affiliation of NWTSA with CASA, and the NWTSA Distinguished Service Award with the CASA EXL Award.

Out-of-School Care Co-ordinator a Finalist for Provincial Award

The Northern Lights School Division Board of Trustees would like to congratulate Preschool and Out-of-School Care Co-ordinator Glenda Bouvier on being chosen as a finalist for the 2013 Early Learning and Child Care Professional Awards of Excellence.

"Glenda is dedicated to ensuring our preschool and out of school care programs meet the needs of our communities, families, and, most importantly, our children," says Ron Taylor, Associate Superintendent Human Resources. "She believes that the first five years are vital in a child's development and she is a tireless advocate for early childhood programming and care in the Lakeland region."

Bouvier was selected from more than 140 nominees who work in child care, early childhood services and Parent Link Centres across the province. She was one of five finalists in the Licensed Out-of-School Care category. The finalists were selected based on their "leadership, creativity, innovation and collaboration in their work, and their contribution to positive and stimulating learning environments that motivate children and families to exceed their own expectations."

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Submit your district, regional or school news! Has a teacher or superintendent won an award or retired? Do you have an upcoming conference to promote? Has your school board started an innovative initiative you'd like to mention? Email ssavory@matrixgroupinc.net. The next edition will be published this winter.

The WITS Programs

The WITS Programs bring together schools, families and communities to create responsive environments that help children deal with bullying and peer victimization. WITS has two components: the WITS Primary Program (Kindergarten to Grade 3) and the WITS LEADS Program (Grades 4 to 6). Almost all program resources are available free-of-charge on their website, including the resource guide, lesson plans, online training, videos, posters and pamphlets.

www.witsprogram.ca/schools

News from Alberta

- The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISII) will no longer be funded, as of April 1, 2013. This news was part of the provincial government's budget announcement March 7. This initiative drove the transformation and innovation in Alberta for more than a decade.
- College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) Executive Director Kath Rhyason is retiring as of July 31, 2013. Her replacement will be retiring superintendent of Lethbridge Public, Barry Litun. Barry has served for four years as a CASS board member and was 2010-2011 CASS president.
- The College of Alberta School Superintendents were very busy this spring as they prepared for a number of events, including the Learning Symposium in March, the CASS Alberta Education Annual Conference in April, the Team Leadership Academy in May and a strategic planning event in June. Colleagues from outside Alberta have attended most of these events in the past.

Get to Know CASA/ACAS

Learn more about CASA/ACAS at www.casa-acas.ca. Here you'll find their mission and goals, a list of the Executive, a history of the organization...and much more!

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