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LEADERS & LEARNERS

THE VOICE OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/L'ASSOCIATION
CANADIENNE DES ADMINISTRATEURS ET DES
ADMINISTRATRICES SCOLAIRES

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CASA Events

- The 2010 Annual Summer Conference will be in Quebec City. The theme of next year's conference will be "Dealing with Children's Mental Health."

Watch for details on this event in upcoming issues of the *Leaders & Learners* newsletter and at www.casa-acas.ca.

Message From The President: Time To Invest In Early Child Development

We know for certain that every dollar we invest in children before they are six years old saves us up to \$17 in social service costs. So why does Canada shamefully spend so little in support of its youngest and most vulnerable citizens? What will it take to change the status quo—to move from talk to action and make a difference for children, families and our communities?



Jim Grieve
CASA president

Similar initiatives in many provinces confirm all the evidence about the economic, academic achievement and social returns that will accrue from our investment in early child development.

But there is more to it when it comes to public spending. So many children show up in grade one well behind their peers, and it becomes harder for our dedicated teachers to deal with unresolved problems

and undiagnosed learning and behaviour issues that frustrate children, parents and teachers alike. By "harder," I also mean more costly, both in terms of budget as well as the extensive human costs involved.

The good news is several provinces, including Ontario, have created opportunities to make that difference. A new report entitled *With Our Best Future in Mind*, by Dr. Charles Pascal, early learning advisor to Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty, presents a clear and powerful blueprint for early learning and achievement. The report calls for sweeping, collaborative action to place early learning firmly on the public agenda for Ontario and the rest of Canada.

This report calls attention to the need to build on best practices and embed proven strategies uniformly toward a total transformation of our approach to early learning. The report proposes expanded Best Start Child and Family Centres and introduces Early Learning Programs as the enhanced full-day model for four- and five-year-olds.

All of us working in education across Canada want to fund nothing short of a revolutionary approach to providing services for young children and their families. The time for that revolution is now! For most of our professional careers, educational leaders have longed for greater convergence of early child development and the first critical years of formal schooling. We know that when young children and their parents are well supported with rich, universally accessible and high-quality early learning programs, they are better prepared for success in both school and in life.

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Message From The Executive Director: Speak Out About Improvements In Student Achievement

Improving and sustaining high levels of student achievement is the object of effective administration. Leaders of school districts across Canada focus more and more on instructional techniques and training of staff to achieve better results. Provincial governments set targets for improvement. You will hear regularly of the goal of meeting 75 per cent at a high level and then of 85 per cent. It goes without saying that perfect achievement by all students is the ultimate goal.

Our schools are improving year by year. And our students are producing better measured results each year. The resources provided are better; the training programs are improved. Our students' achievements compare favourably with their counterparts across the modern world. Reading skills and mathematics ability are at all-time highs.

With all of these positives in place and shown in the public, there is a continuing suspicion and skepticism from some public sources that this is not the true picture.

Some critics claim that the results are skewed; some feel that the value of today's credit has been reduced; some feel that schools are not providing the proper curriculum for chal-

lenges of the modern world.

As CASA members, we have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about the data on student achievement.

We need to know comparable statistics from other competitive countries. We need to know and have full confidence in our measurements of student ability. And we need to bring positive messages regularly to our staffs and to the media and the parents in our local communities.

There is ample evidence that our students are achieving at high levels and that the learning they acquire is of real value. Senior administrators must be spokespersons for this message on student achievement.



Frank Kelly
CASA executive director

Message From The President, continued

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We must ensure that our already resource-challenged environments get the capital and operating support that is essential if we are to make initiatives such as *With Our Best Future in Mind* come to life.

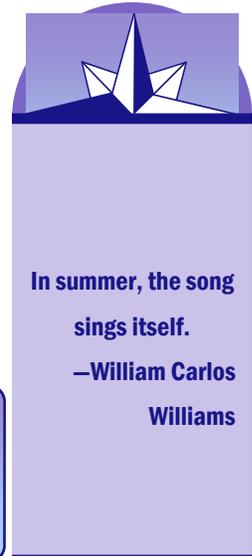
The current economic downturn should be seen as a key driver of change, not an excuse to skimp on plans that hold such promise for all children and families across Canada.

The premier of Ontario is to be commended for his vision to create a more prosperous province. The people of Ontario have been given a call to action that is challenging but very doable; one that will yield enormous benefits for our very best future.

Educators and early child development professionals across Canada are ready to do important work together to create new early learning programs. But even the most powerful vision remains little more than a "talking point" without adequate funding support.

Action in early childhood is too important to be just "talk."

I hope those of you who attended this year's annual conference in Calgary found yourselves engaged in meaningful sessions on this and other important topics of the day.



This column marks Jim Grieve's final contribution to the newsletter as CASA's president, as he hands over these duties to incoming president Carol Gray. Watch for Carol's contributions in upcoming issues. Very special thanks to Jim for each of his thoughtfully written columns.

—The Editor

Early Childhood Education: A Review Of Initiatives In Ontario And Quebec

In light of the focus on early childhood at this year's annual conference in Calgary, *Leaders & Learners* asked several senior education administrators to share information and advice from their provincial perspectives.

Jill Worthy is the superintendent of education for the SW4 region of the Toronto District School Board, the largest school board in Canada. Her responses represent a broad view of the Early Childhood Education situation in public schools in Ontario, with specific details from TDSB.

Carol Gray is the director of secondary schools for the Lester B. Pearson School Board, the largest English-language board in Quebec. Carol provided her responses in collaboration with **Catherine Prokosh**, senior consultant for K4 program, and **Dr. Cindy Finn**, director of student services, both with the Lester B. Pearson School Board. Her input focuses on the situation with English-language public schools in Quebec, with specific details from LBPSB.

Please tell our readers about the key early childhood education (ECE) initiatives that are in place in your province today.

Jill Worthy: The most recent and exciting initiative is the release of the early learning advisor's report on full-day early learning, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, on June 15. This report has far-reaching recommendations in terms of integrating child care, parenting supports and kindergarten programs into early years hubs, ideally in school settings.

At the core is a recommendation that full-day learning be publicly funded, through a phased-in approach, starting in September 2010. (It should be noted that French-language boards were already providing full-day programs.) The provincial government, which commissioned the report, had previously committed to \$200 million in the first year and \$300 million in year two to support implementation. Boards of education are expecting further direction in September.

A related initiative is the expansion of Parenting and Family Literacy Centres across the province, in school settings (check the Ministry of Education website for information about numbers/locations). These are drop-in programs where parents/guardians can bring children from birth to age five to participate in emergent learning experiences.

A previous and related initiative was the expansion of child care in schools through a tri-ministerial initiative called Best Start (ministries of Education, Health, and Children and Youth Services). This initiative also established Best Start networks in each municipality, with the intention of bringing together all service providers for children ages zero to six, to promote integration of services. A further strand of Best Start was provincial funding for the administration of the Early Development Instrument to all senior kindergarten students, every three years, to provide baseline and then comparative data regarding improvements.

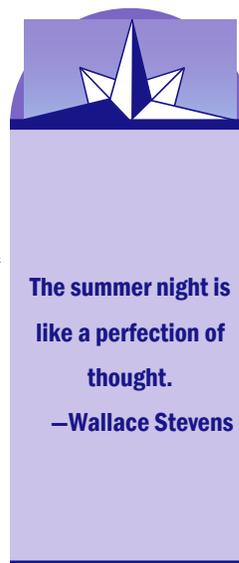
Carol Gray: The new family policy was introduced by the Quebec government in 1997-98. Under the policy, jurisdiction for early childhood education is split at age five.

Prior to the introduction of the new family policy in Quebec in 1997, two programs were available to four-year-olds: kindergarten for four-year-olds in inner-city schools and passé-partout programs for low-income families living mostly in rural Quebec. Both of these have been maintained by the government but are no longer being developed.

In 1998, a strong commitment was made by Quebec with the establishment of the Early Childhood Education and Care Policy. At that time, the subsidized \$5-a-day daycare system was introduced, which was increased by the Liberal government in 2004 to \$7 per day. Daycare for children under five years old is provided through the CPE structure (centre de la petite enfance) under the jurisdiction of the Ministère de la Famille.

At age five, children can attend non-compulsory full-day kindergarten in the education system now governed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sports (MELS). This full-day kindergarten was introduced in 1997. Subsidized \$7-per-day daycare for school-age children aged five and up is provided by MELS.

The Quebec Education Program organizes grades into cycles; Cycle I (grades one and two) is considered a time to work on developmental emerging skills. Curriculum renewal encourages looping, developmental
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ECE Initiatives In Ontario And Quebec, continued

(Continued from page 3)

emergence of competencies and is very child friendly. Class-size ratios are smaller at these lower grades. Class-size ratios in disadvantaged areas will also be reduced over the next few years, which will further lower class sizes in K and Cycle I in certain areas.

The Quebec Policy on Special Needs emphasizes early prevention/intervention as a means of promoting student success. Many school boards have made early literacy and numeracy a priority in their strategic plans; for example, LBPSB has early literacy intervention in Cycle I in both English and French. In disadvantaged regions, there is special funding for a half-day program for four-year-olds for early stimulation.

Kindergarten for four-year-olds is currently under study by the Quebec English School Boards Association and is being piloted at LBPSB. A school readiness study was completed in 2008 and is being used by local CLSCs (local area health centres) to plan services. Local CLSCs have many programs for parents of children from zero to five years. Children with handicaps may begin school at age four; children with advanced intellectual and social development may also request early school entry.

Is there support for these initiatives from local school boards? In what ways do they demonstrate support?

Jill: There has been a groundswell of support from school boards for the recommendations of *With Our Best Future in Mind*. However, concerns have been expressed in relation to funding. Concerns have also been expressed by the teachers' union as they feel only teachers should teach, and the report recommends a blended model with teachers and ECEs working together.

School boards are very supportive of the concept of early years hubs in general and happy to receive the Parenting and Family Literacy Centres. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services also funded one Ontario Early Years Centre per riding, and these have also been very well received.

School boards were keen participants in Best Start as it related to funding child care but their engagement at Best Start Networks is inconsistent across the province.

There is genuine interest in recognizing the school as the hub in coordinating early years programs and services but there is concern that the principal will become overloaded unless the right supports are provided. School boards are very supportive of the implementation of EDI

as it provides useful data in determining how to allocate resources to best meet the needs of children and their families.

Carol: The school boards completely support the full-day kindergarten programs and the existing inner-city classes for four-year-olds and *passé-partout* classes. However, there is a strong need for general access to educational programs for four-year-olds. Local school boards have begun to assume this role even though there is no funding from the Ministry. For example, the Lester B. Pearson School Board has funded classes for four-year-olds for the past two years and is committed to expanding the number of groups in the 2009-10 school year.

School boards support ECE initiatives by staffing programs accordingly and making resources available. At LBPSB, the Educational Services Department provides early literacy teachers and professional development with elementary Cycle I teachers to train them in reading records and balanced literacy, and supplies schools with reading assessment materials such as the DRA (developmental reading assessment). Within the Student Services Department, the emphasis is on prevention through FSSTT (Family and School Support and Treatment Teams) in 15 of the elementary schools. They deploy most of their speech and language resources in the early years, as 11 of 12 speech and language pathologists work at the elementary level. The LBPSB offers a REACH program for youngsters aged five to eight with extreme behavioural difficulties, and there are transition protocols and procedures to assist children coming into kindergarten.

How broad is the program?

Jill: The numbers of programs are limited but available in all school boards. Some boards, like TDSB, had a historic commitment to having child care programs in schools (now at 319), while others are just beginning to provide this support. In general, most boards have targeted high-needs communities in locating Best Start child care programs and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres.

Carol: School boards throughout the province offer full-day kindergarten classes for five-year-olds. The programs for four-year-olds are limited to a small number of boards that have taken the initiative. For example, in the 2009-10 school year, three of the English school boards have made this commitment.

How are ECE programs staffed?

Jill: If you mean child care, they are

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**There shall be
eternal summer in
the grateful heart.**

—Celia Thaxter

ECE Initiatives In Ontario And Quebec, continued

(Continued from page 4)

staffed with a combination of ECEs and ECAs. If you mean kindergarten programs, they are staffed with teachers who have a primary qualification as well as a BA/B. Ed.

In Ontario, there is a significant disparity between the salary of teachers and ECEs, which is a significant concern. It can be a roadblock to forming equal partnerships and assuming equal responsibility. It is one reason why kindergarten and child care remain separate rather than integrated programs.

Carol: The school boards that continue to receive funding for inner-city classes and passé-partout classes often supplement the Ministry funding to provide services to more students.

The school boards that offer the non-subsidized program to four-year-olds assume the financial commitment for the classes. The classes are staffed with qualified teachers using the provincial collective agreement Article 8-4.02a, which establishes the maximum and average number of students (four-year-olds) per pre-school group as Average 15 Maximum 18.

Lester B. Pearson School Board and other boards look to hire certified teachers; CPEs (daycares) hire educators who have appropriate training in early childhood education.

What are the indicators of success used to measure the effectiveness of these programs?

Jill: At the provincial level, the EDI is the only common and required measure at this time. At the local board level, a variety of different measures are used to assess program quality and children's progress.

Using Toronto as an example, the quality of city-sponsored child care programs is determined through a rubric, and then made public (posted on the City of Toronto website). Kindergarten students' progress is measured based on provincial expectations laid out in the Ministry curriculum document *The Kindergarten Program*. Local boards may add their own measures such as DRA as a reading assessment, letter/number identification and so on.

Carol: The kindergarten-for-four-year-olds program is based on the Preschool Education Program of the Ministry of Education. Six competencies have been identified.

- to interact harmoniously with others

- to affirm his or her personality
- to perform sensorimotor actions
- to complete an activity or project
- to construct his or her understanding of the world
- to communicate

These competencies are used to evaluate the children throughout the program and as outcomes at the end of the year.

What guidelines exist to introduce ECE programming and to measure its effectiveness?

Jill: As above, the guidelines for kindergarten programs are clearly laid out in *The Kindergarten Program*. Guidelines for child care have been more recently established through Best Start, called Early Learning for Every Child Today, or ELECT. This document provides a developmental continuum and links well to the Ministry of Education document.

How have parents responded to ECE programming?

Jill: Parents are very supportive of ECE programming and want more, as in full-day learning. They also value a full range of program options from ages zero to six through Parenting Programs and child care. At this point, kindergarten is optional for parents; children are not required to attend school until the year in which they turn six.

Carol: The parents have responded very favourably in the schools where the kindergarten-for-four-year-olds program is available. The parents of the children in these programs make a financial commitment to support the program (\$100 per month). Also, parents have been supportive partners in the research project that has been undertaken by the Lester B. Pearson School Board and Concordia University.

The \$7-per-day daycare is very popular, with long waiting lists at the pre-school level. Community-run pre-schools exist in many regions (e.g., Mudpuddle, Montessori). Clearly, parents are seeking programs that provide stimulation. At LBPSB, we have expanded our K4 program from three pilot schools to five elementary schools

Will ECE initiatives already in place continue if full funding is not provided?

Jill: There are many models of full-day learning that already exist through creative partnerships and creative use of funding. One example is Toronto First Duty, a pilot initiative, which paved the

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ECE Initiatives In Ontario And Quebec, continued

(Continued from page 5)

way for Best Start, and now the report on full-day early learning. It is a fully integrated early years program, bringing together kindergarten, child care and parenting programs into a single strand, with no additional dollars.

There are also many schools where partnerships have been formed with child care and community agencies to expand early years programs at no additional cost. These programs demonstrate the commitment is there from service providers and the interest is there from parents.

Carol: It is very difficult to maintain funding for the kindergarten program for four-year-olds. The contribution from the parents covers less than 25 per cent of the cost. The school boards can only make such a commitment on an annual basis at best. Since K4 funding is only in place for disadvantaged areas, more provincial dollars are needed to expand this to all regions and to ensure that professionals can engage in more early intervention and prevention.

What do you see as the most pressing issues facing ECE in your region?

Jill: The need to better coordinate early years programs and services so parents are not having to work their way through the present patchwork to make sure their children experience a high-quality program for a full day. The need for funding to enable that to happen. The need for a coherent provincial policy that focuses on children from zero to eight, rather than different ministries taking responsibility for different elements.

Carol: The most pressing issue is the financial one. The school boards must receive funding from the Ministry for the kindergarten program for four-year-olds.

Other issues include teacher training, curriculum development and the need for inter-ministerial collaboration (MELS, MSSS, Family).

Not everyone sees the full value of early intervention and prevention programs. Promotion and prevention are hard concepts to sell in education, as we often wait for problems to be identified before intervening; however, there is great value to early programs.

What advice about successful ECE initiatives would you like to share with your colleagues across the country? What information would you like to receive from them?

Jill: Start small, think big. Many of the provincial direc-

tions presently taking place have stemmed from local examples of excellence that pushed people to take a different view and/or to find funding to expand.

Receiving information about governance models that cut across silos successfully would be great.

Carol: There are two components of our K4 program that our board is pleased to share with colleagues: our laptop project and the research project with Concordia University.

Collaboration with community agencies is critical for success with ECE. Partnerships between parents, the education sector and other ministries (e.g., family/daycare, health and social services) are critical. It would be helpful to learn about other ECE initiatives in other provinces, particularly with respect to teacher training programs and curriculum development.

Are there any comments that you would like to add about ECE, the theme of this year's CASA conference?

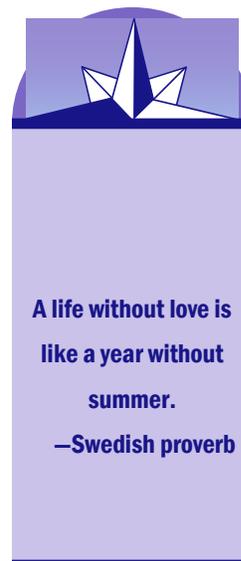
Jill: It is wonderful that this conference is bringing attention to the critical importance of the early years in ensuring the future health and success of our youngest citizens and their families!

Carol: Research findings highlight the importance of school readiness on children's long-term developmental outcomes (Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1998; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Our business is education; we are in the best position to assure that the predominant pedagogical approach for four-year-olds builds on the belief that young children learn best through direct hands-on experiences that are appropriate for their developmental level and by active involvement and interactions with their environment and with supportive teachers.

Programming must be play-based and exploratory, not didactic. There must be balance in physical, socio-emotional, communicative and intellectual activities. The mixture of teacher and child-initiated activities is also important.

Early childhood education is a challenge that should not be left to childcare facilities. School boards must assume a leadership role in this important area. In education, all aspects are linked so that the earlier the intervention, the better the chances of success at late elementary and high school.

Thank you both for your thoughts here.



CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd

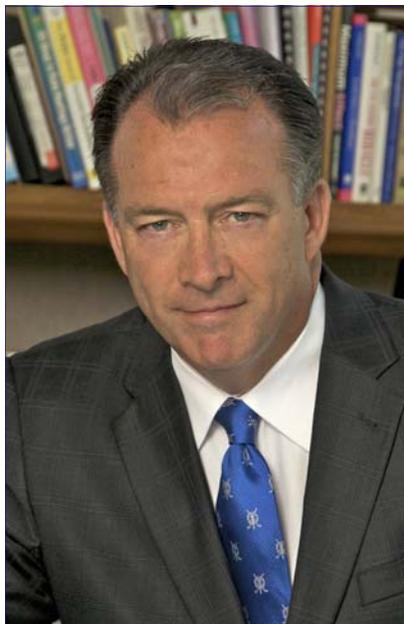


Susan LaRosa
Ontario

Susan is the director of education for York Catholic District School Board, a position she has held since 1997. She began her career in education as a junior high teacher and has held positions as principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent.

She earned her BA from Ottawa University, and M. Ed. (Administration) and MBA from Queen's. Susan is the recipient of the York Region Woman of the Year award and Administrator of the Year award for Niagara University. She is also the first Catholic director of education to be recognized by the Learning Partnership.

Susan is involved with the York Region Police Appreciation Committee, the York Region Human Services Coalition, the York Region Character Council, and works with a variety of charities including ShareLife, United Way, Hands of Hope and ABC Read.

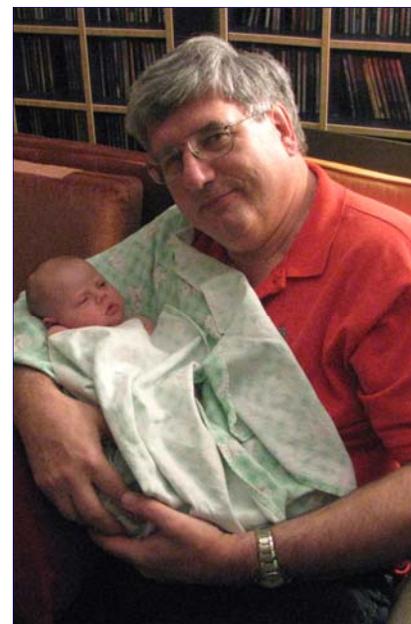


David K. Thomas
Ontario

David is the director of education for the Upper Canada District School Board. From 1997 to 2003, he was superintendent of education and then superintendent of schools for the Peel District School Board. He has offered his services to the boards of numerous education, community and sports organizations; organized a number of education conferences; and delivered many keynote addresses throughout his career.

He earned his B. Ed. from Queen's, his B. Sc. from Trent and his M. Ed. from York University. He has received several awards for his commitment to public education.

David is an accomplished lacrosse coach and the recipient of the Sportsman of the Year award from the City of Peterborough. He has also provided colour commentary for lacrosse events on TSN.



Ed Wittchen
Alberta

Ed is the professional development director for CASA, an education consultant for the Alberta School Boards Association, superintendent of Kisiko Awasis and Mother Earth's Children's Charter schools, and a newspaper columnist. He was superintendent of Northern Lights School Division from 1992 to 2007. Since 1971, he has been a teacher, coach, principal and assistant superintendent. He has also taught Masters-level courses for San Diego State and Royal Roads universities.

He earned his B. Sc. from Montana State and M. Ed. from the University of Calgary. Ed received the Canadian Superintendent of the Year award from both CASA and AASA, and the Lt. Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Service.

Ed and his wife Vera have two daughters and one granddaughter.

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Our Mission:

CASA will advance quality public education and excellence in system level leadership through advocacy and national collaboration.



Our Beliefs:

CASA believes that:

- Cultural diversity is a unique strength that enriches our nation.
- Communication and collaboration with parents and other partners is integral to successful student learning.
- Quality public education provides the best opportunity for a nation to enhance the lives of all its citizens.
- Effective system, provincial and national level leadership enables and supports excellence in teaching and learning.
- A comprehensive education, equitable and accessible to all, is the key to meeting the diverse needs and securing a successful future for our youth.

Specific strategies to advance the mission:

- Establish position papers on specific topics as they relate to the beliefs and interests of the association.
- Recruit new people.
- Establish a national representation.
- Establish a three-tier public relations and publications strategy.
- Establish a funding team to create an operating budget.

How To Put Your School Division In The Spotlight: Contribute To *Leaders & Learners*

Just as the front page of this newsletter states, *Leaders & Learners* is the voice of the Canadian Association of School Administrators. We want to hear your voice. Consider putting forth your ideas, articles and photos for future editions.

Maybe there is a success story happening in your neck of the woods and you want to share it. Perhaps there is an issue in education you would like to see discussed by a cross-country panel. You may want to share your reaction to what a panelist said at a recent CASA conference, at your provincial affiliate's meeting or at other education events. *Leaders & Learners* would like to hear about your ideas.

You don't have to worry about being a professional wordsmith to contribute. Your newsletter editor can help you. Your rough ideas can be written into full-length articles for you, and your submitted articles and photographs can be professionally edited.

Regular readers of *Leaders & Learners* know that in most issues we run a feature called "Faces In The Crowd."

It is a section in the newsletter set aside to allow our members to get to know one another a little better. This isn't always easy when CASA members are spread out across such a huge but sparsely populated country with only a few opportunities each year to meet in person. We hope that this feature helps to bridge the distances between us.

Do you know a CASA member who deserves to be in the spotlight? Is there a colleague that you would like everyone to meet? Maybe you'd even like to share your own story in a future "Faces In The Crowd." Don't be bashful! Please get in touch and share the news about your colleagues or yourself.

Regular editions of the newsletter come out six times a year, with a special double issue following the annual summer leadership academy. Give yourself at least six to eight weeks lead time if your idea is at all time sensitive.

If you have story ideas, questions, concerns or comments, please contact the editor, **Tara Lee Wittchen**, via email at tarawittchen@eastlink.ca.