



CASSA-ACGCS
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

Greetings from the President

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**All websites and email addresses are active.
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various resources.*

In my work as Superintendent, like so many of you, I have numerous opportunities to meet individuals who are new to me. Most often these encounters are positive, involving planning for student and teacher opportunities. The other less often, but more challenging, encounters are grappling with the difficult human resources or legal issues that come with this work. Aside from my difficulty in remembering names, what I do enjoy in all these scenarios is the introduction of another person into my life. When I reflect on these opportunities and their significance, I am reminded of Ryszard Kapuscinski's book *The Other*.

In his book, Kapuscinski entitles the last chapter "Encountering The Other As The Challenge Of The Twenty-First Century." He states that each encounter with an "Other" (described as someone who is new and thinks differently than you do) has an unknown quantity, a level of uncertainty as to how it will turn out. "How would it go? How would it develop? What would be the conclusion?" Kapuscinski would agree that we not only have a need but also an "ethical duty – to approach, to be open and friendly." He would argue this is the best approach to use with the Other because in our world, particularly in the 21st century, "We shall constantly be encountering the new Other, who



Reg Klassen
CASSA/ACGCS President

will gradually start to emerge from the chaos and confusion of modern life." Therefore, as we live together in our global community, how we approach the Other will determine how we move forward as human beings, and this in turn will shape the new Other.

I view our work as system leaders in a similar manner, that our approach to others will in fact help shape the character of who we will become as people. I recognize I have oversimplified Kapuscinski's thinking and it deserves a longer discussion, but I hope the essence of what he articulates has been captured. I believe our efforts in education, through our respective organizations, provide us with a glimpse of the possibilities for the future. This future holds the potential of greatness; however, I believe the outcome does rely on how we approach the Other.

Reg Klassen
CASSA President

As we live together in our global community, how we approach the Other will determine how we move forward as human beings, and this in turn will shape the new Other.

Greetings from the Executive Director



Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

Hopefully our readers know that CASSA has been committed to supporting student mental health and well-being for a few several years and that our Strategic Plan has reflected that commitment. The last few issues of *Leaders and Learners* magazine (available at <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/domain/34>) and our last two conferences have focused on promising practices from across Canada. Our next conference will look at student mental health using an equity lens (for more information, visit <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/domain/17>).

In 2017, we commissioned a discussion paper entitled “System Leadership in School Mental Health in Canada,” which you can read at https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/cms/lib/ON01929128/Centricity/Domain/8/CASSA_Discussion_Paper_System_Leadership_School_MH.pdf.

I am sometimes asked where and how school system leaders should begin in their efforts from the system leader’s unique role to address student mental health. I always direct

them to Appendix A (page 14) in that discussion paper. The section introduces the organizational conditions for effective school mental health and follows with a self-reflection tool.

Since that time, our plans have evolved to include a priority on staff mental health and well-being. To that end we have been the guest of the McConnell Foundation as a participant in its nationally convened conversations about how to address and support jurisdictions to respond to the prevalence of mental health issues within school communities with comprehensive, universal and school-wide approaches to well-being for students and staff.

We last met in May 2019 in Fredericton at which time we heard from the Health and Education Research Group at the University of New Brunswick about how New Brunswick has been able to link efforts across school boards and community agencies with an Integrated Service Delivery Model. A description of the model can be found at <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/isd.html>.

Several key principles emerged from the two days of shared conversations:

- Adopt a relationship-centred, solutions focused mentality;
- Focus on a shared theme;
- Build bridges between models and frameworks;
- Establish role clarity;
- Influence systems through networks;
- Leverage stories of specific cases;
- Build in cross-sectoral leadership;
- Invest in health and education collaboration;
- Recognize schools as hubs;
- Use data to provide context; and
- Prepare for change.

I will continue to update CASSA members as the conversations continue.

Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

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Sponsor Profile:

Baragar Systems has connections to CASSA that go back to the organization's early days, when it was still known as CASA, the Canadian Association of School Administrators. Baragar founder Chuck Curteis, who began his career as a teacher and high school administrator, was a member of CASA around 1973-74, when he was the head of the Elementary-Secondary Education Statistics branch of Statistics Canada. His objective then was to offer support for school districts through statistics.

At a CASA meeting a few years later, Curteis noted the concern expressed by directors of education and superintendents about how to correctly estimate the kindergarten projections. The baby boom had ended, and so the enrollment numbers were less predictable. He was aware of the "Baby Bonus" data set that was controlled by Health and Welfare Canada that would provide the number of one- to five-year-olds by geography. Curteis wrote the outline of how projections could be created using the Family Allowance data – he actually came up with the outline for the process that became the basis of the first Baragar suite of software projects on the back of a napkin during that CASA meeting.

Baragar Systems was founded by Curteis in 1981. The company currently employs 22 full-time staff and serves 113 school districts that enroll more than 2.3 million students in Canada and the United States. Its first clients from the early 1980s – school districts in Burnaby, Victoria, Mission and Richmond in British Columbia – all continue to work with Baragar to this day, a testament to the quality of the company's software and customer service.

Baragar has another early connection to CASA, notes Senior Vice President Berni Grenier.

"We started as the first and only sponsor," she says. In the early 1990s, CASA held one of its meetings in Charlottetown, P.E.I., and Curteis reached out to the organization to see if Baragar could participate. There was no official tradeshow in those days, so Curteis and his son Jason (currently the company's president) set up in the hallway outside the



Barry Wowk (CASSA's former AASA Western Rep) and Baragar's Berni Grenier (centre) and Jeremy Baisch (right) in the sponsor exhibit hall at the 2013 CASSA annual conference. Photo by Ed Wittchen.

Baragar Systems

conference space and spoke with delegates as they walked by.

Baragar has been a regular conference sponsor since 2011, and Grenier has personally attended the last nine conferences. In 2019, she co-presented a session with Catherine McCullough of CMC Leadership at the CASSA conference in Richmond, B.C.

"Baragar believes that national conversations are very important in the development of education in Canada," she says. "CASSA provides a forum for the educators, who are responsible for creating pockets of greatness and innovation, to present their success stories to other educators from other parts of Canada. They share how they overcome hurdles and answer questions so that other districts can replicate or adapt their work. Baragar supports this philosophy by both sponsoring and attending as many of the sessions as possible."

The company is a good match for CASSA, she adds, because it develops products and provides services for the education industry.

"As a planning company, we are aware that we need to stay informed of the conversations going on across the country so that we can continue to plan the development of our tools by staying current and relevant," she says. "We are a Canadian company and feel a sense of pride in the national success of the education environment."

Grenier lists several highlights of attending the CASSA conferences over the years, including the sharing of ideas from educators across the country.

"Sometimes what is interesting is how they have used a product and service to solve a problem or improve a situation," she notes.

Another highlight is the casual dress code at the conference, which seems to translate into the casual nature of the conversations and the ebb and flow of the participants to mingle beyond the people they came with. Grenier also appreciates the group activities that take place during these summer gatherings, noting that they provide opportunities to build long-lasting relationships that extend beyond the conferences.

Grenier confirms Baragar will be present as a sponsor for the 2020 conference in St. Andrew's by-the-Sea, New Brunswick, and that she will once again attend the event.

"I am looking forward to the opportunity to meet up with some of my clients in New Brunswick who will hopefully participate," she says, "and I hope to get a round in on what has to be the most beautiful golf course in Canada."

To learn more about Baragar Systems, visit the company online at www.baragar.com, and be sure to stop by the Baragar booth in the sponsors hall at the CASSA conference in July 2020. ○

Faces in the

Crowd:

Daniel O'Brien



“Leadership is measured best, I think, not by how the organization functions while you are there but how it will function when you are gone.”

Daniel O'Brien is the Assistant Director – Programs for the Western Region of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD). This region serves 11,254 students in 64 schools spread across a vast geography on the west coast, south coast and northern peninsula of Newfoundland.

He began his career in public education in Newfoundland as a high school teacher and within six years became a principal. Daniel has also served as a program specialist and director of schools.

Daniel completed undergraduate degrees in physical education and education at Memorial University. He earned his master's degree in education at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Here he has kindly shared with *Leaders & Learners* his reflections on being an educator and a leader.

What inspired you to work in public education and, in particular, to work in senior administration?

This will sound melodramatic, but it is an anecdote I share sometimes with leaders and staff. If I asked any group of educators to

join me in going to a third-world village to improve the lives of the children there through education, and I would make sure they would be paid and their families would be looked after, and I asked them would they join me, most would say yes, and almost all I have asked would want to. Then I say the work in front of us is important too. That child you meet tomorrow needs you just as much. That is what drives me.

My move to senior administration came from the understanding I gained that principals play such a pivotal role in the direction of schools. A principal can be a game changer! My hope is that in working and learning with them, I am able to touch the lives of more children.

Tell us about some of your personal points of pride as a senior administrator in public education.

My experiences in leading change have been varied and extensive. I have worked with many educators to shape assessment in our schools and to focus that assessment on

authentic demonstrations of learning. I like to think I have made a difference in this area and still continue this work as part of a provincial committee established by the school district.

I am also part of a provincial team that recently reshaped the school development process for our ministry. This was very rewarding work, and at this time we have our first schools using the new model to chart growth and improvement.

I am also very passionate about student engagement and have done some work with administrators to help improve the lived experience of students in school. So many of our students see no purpose in schools, they see no authenticity in the work, and they leave us with a negative opinion about learning. We really need to change this.

If I was to speak with pride about a recent initiative, it would be the work accomplished recently with the new administrators hired by our district. I was part of a team that got these new leaders together over the summer, and we shared in a tremendous three days of learning. I learned so much from this group, and I think

that together we prepared each other for the start of what I know will be an amazing year.

How would you describe your personal style of leadership?

That is a difficult question to answer. I hope people see me as a learner and, by extension, a leading learner. I can only be successful as a leader if I have increased the capacity of those around me to lead, and that is what I try to do. Good leaders, I believe, build coherence around a shared purpose and work as part of a team to strengthen an organization in such a way that makes them dispensable. Leadership is measured best, I think, not

by how the organization functions while you are there but how it will function when you are gone.

Please tell our readers a little bit about your personal history.

My wife and I reside in Corner Brook on the west coast of Newfoundland. This is new for us and came as a result of my recent appointment. Our son has just graduated from high school and is living in a small fishing community on the northeast coast of Newfoundland called Bonavista. This is the place we called home for almost 20 years and where my wife worked as an early child-

hood educator. Our son's love for the sea and attachment to that community will make leaving difficult for him, if he ever does leave. My daughter is studying at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, after completing two years at Memorial University.

Family is important to me and many of our interests are shared. We all love the outdoors, hiking, dirt bikes, motorcycles and hockey. And we all love working with children. Both my children have spent countless hours coaching and leading younger children, and my wife and I look for every opportunity to make a difference in the life of a student. ○

Faces in the Crowd:

Darryl Feener is the Assistant Director of Education – Programs for the Avalon Region of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD), a post he has held since 2017.

Darryl Feener

The school district consists of four regions (Labrador, Western, Central and Avalon) that represent all English-speaking students and schools in the province. NLESD serves just under 65,000 students at 256 schools and five alternate sites.

Darryl has worked in public education in Newfoundland and Labrador for 30 years, beginning as a teacher in 1990. A highlight of his teaching career was when he was selected to visit Sweden and Finland to share successful practice and learning through enterprise education. When he was teaching in North West River, Labrador, his enterprise education class took on an entrepreneurial venture that included going on a caribou hunt in central Labrador and learning how to process the wild meat. The students then distributed the finished products, including caribou sausages, steaks, roasts and burgers, free of charge to seniors in the community, continuing a longstanding practice in the Indigenous community of sharing the harvest.

His professional journey has seen him serve as a program specialist for school development,



social studies, physical education, economic education and human resources for the former Labrador School Board. In addition, Darryl worked as a program specialist for rural education with the former Eastern School District and as a summer instructor at Memorial University. He was a principal at two elementary and two junior high schools and a Senior Education Officer for Metro Intermediate Schools. Before moving to the Assistant Director position, Darryl held a provincial position for student learning with human resources responsibilities for Labrador. Darryl studied at Memorial University, earning a bachelor of education, bachelor of physical education and master of education degrees.

Darryl's philosophy of leadership includes the beliefs that leaders embrace questioning and curiosity, leaders use evidence-based decision making, leaders help all stakeholders build meaningful relationships, leaders challenge and support the learning capabilities of all students, and leaders ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve their very best in a safe and accepting school community. He was inspired to work as a school system leader by his intention to have a broader impact on student learning and engagement, advocate for at-risk students and be a voice for teachers and administrators among leaders in education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

He has been involved in many initiatives that have had positive impacts on student learning, including policy development and implementation, restorative justice/ Relationships First, school development, leadership development and supporting at-risk learners. As a result of these and other collaborative experiences, Darryl has achieved a thorough understanding of and appreciation for the culturally diverse community of learners present throughout his district. He has demonstrated a strong commitment toward building professional learning communities, which is predicated on the principles of empowerment and shared leadership.

His work has included spearheading an action research project in identifying and supporting at-risk students at the intermediate grade level. The research tracked, profiled and provided escalated levels of intervention for each student who was at risk academically and who lacked social-emotional skills. This critical data was later shared as students transitioned from grade to grade, and from school to school, further cementing student learning. Because of the early identification and targeted interventions, these students continue to experience more academic success. Meaningful student-teacher relationships developed, and barriers that were previously perceived as insurmountable were broken down as well.

He was also part of two provincial teams that created a school development model built on the premise of learning for all and student engagement. This model creates alignment within the system, blending the district's strategic plan, school development plan and teachers' professional learning plans all within its vision of maximizing student learning in a safe and accepting school community. Darryl has also served on a number of education-related provincial committees.

Darryl is an avid outdoorsperson who leads an active and healthy lifestyle. He enjoys hunting, fishing and leisure time at the cabin with his family. He has been a player and a coach in hockey, racket sports, baseball and softball, and volleyball, and he has served on provincial sports executives for volleyball, hockey and badminton. Darryl's work as a coach and executive member for various sports teams has been recognized with an award from School Sports NL. He was a member of the mission staff for Newfoundland and Labrador at the 2003 Canada Games. Darryl also writes articles for *Newfoundland Sportsman* magazine.

Darryl is married to Regina North, who recently retired after 31 years in education as a teacher and program development specialist. They have two sons: Andrew is working toward his second degree while Ryan is teaching in La Crete, Alberta. ○

**JOIN CASSA AT THEIR ANNUAL
CONFERENCE FROM JULY 2 TO 4, 2020,
AT ST. ANDREW'S BY-THE-SEA, N.B.**



**THEME:
EQUITY AND INCLUSION
FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING**

The CASSA Annual Conference draws school system leaders from across Canada to learn and share information on current topics in education. More details will be posted to www.cassa-acgcs.ca as they become available.

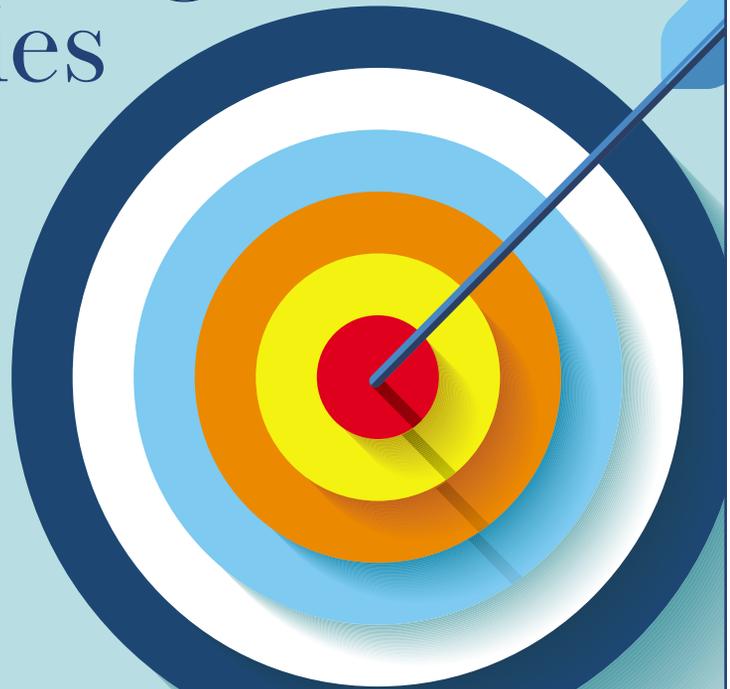


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Share Your Success Stories!



Write for the
Summer 2020
issue of
Leaders & Learners!

We are looking for features and success stories from each region of Canada: Eastern Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Western Canada and Northern Canada.

THEME: EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOR STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

We are looking for articles about how schools, school districts and community partners are **supporting every student** through programs, community partnerships and professional development for principals/teachers that promote *Equity and Inclusion for Student Mental Health and Well-being*.

The Summer 2020 edition will be mailed to readers in Spring 2020 and will be available to attendees at our Conference, which will be held July 2-4, 2020, at St. Andrews by-the-Sea, New Brunswick, and is focused on this same theme.

If you have an article idea that fits into this theme, please send a short abstract (50 to 100 words) to Kaitlin Vitt, editor of the magazine, at kvitt@matrixgroupinc.net, and copy ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca.

Proposals are due: December 2, 2019

Final articles are due: May 4, 2020

Photos are welcome (must be high resolution).

You will be notified if your abstract is selected.



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