



Équité et excellence en éducation  
CASSA-ACGCS  
Equity and Excellence in Education

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*\*All websites and email addresses are active.  
Click them to connect immediately with  
various resources.*

“The Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA), with then President Reg Klassen, and the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) issued a joint letter to federal ministers asking that they take immediate action to ensure that all students, families, and school staff have reliable internet connectivity.”

# Greetings from the President

I'm writing this message mid-October on Thanksgiving Day. I have a lot to be thankful for, not the least of which is my privileged upbringing, and the fact that I'm healthy and safe at home with my wife and kids. My family has access to a good quality public education system, and we live in a larger community that affords us access, although not cheap, to a wealth of information on high-speed internet.

What saddens me, and I know you as well, is that the pandemic has heightened awareness of the inequities that already exist for disadvantaged students. Continued pivots to blended and remote learning remind us that many students still don't have access to a digital device (computer or tablet) with internet connectivity. The Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA), with then President Reg Klassen, and the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) issued a joint letter to federal ministers asking that they take immediate action to ensure that all students, families, and school staff have reliable internet connectivity.

More recently, former CASSA President Cindy Finn and I have had the privilege of working alongside an impressive group of practitioners and researchers including the likes of Tracy Vaillancourt and Andy Hargreaves, as part of a Royal Society of Canada working group. The outcome is the policy briefing titled *Children and Schools During COVID-19 and Beyond: Engagement and Connection Through Opportunity*. (Access the report at <https://rsc-src.ca/en/covid-19-policy-briefing/children-and-schools-during-covid-19-and-beyond-engagement-and-connection>.)



**Curtis Brown**  
CASSA/ACGCS President

This work provided the opportunity to reinforce CASSA's vision for *equity and excellence in education for each learner*, and to influence some of the report's recommendations accordingly. For example, summary recommendation number four refers to the inequities that undermine the work of educators, and recommendation number seven asks the Government of Canada to bring universal public access to the Internet.

As a result of this work, and the relationships developed in the process, CASSA's cause has been further supported in an article titled, *The Case for Free Universal High-Speed Internet* that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on October 4, 2021 (read the article here: <https://rsc-src.ca/en/voices/vulnerability-via-digital-access%E2%80%94case-for-free-universal-high-speed-internet>.)

Here's hoping that by the time you see this newsletter a vaccine has been approved and is being rolled out for children under 12. Stay safe and healthy.

**Curtis Brown**  
CASSA/ACGCS President

# Greetings from the Executive Director



**Ken Bain**  
CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

September 30th marked the first **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**. It will be an annual commemoration honouring the children who died while attending residential schools and the survivors, families, and communities still affected by the legacy of the residential school system. The goal of Orange Shirt Day is to educate people about residential schools in Canada and to honour and remember the experiences and loss of the First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children who were stolen from their families and placed in these schools. May we strive each day to work toward truth and reconciliation.

One of the most beneficial and instructive items on a Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) board meeting agenda is the “Cross Country Check-In.” The check-in provides members with the chance to update the rest of the board on the state of education in their respective province and/or territory. Members consistently identify this part of the meeting as a highlight. A persistent

theme emerged at our last CASSA meeting of the Board of Directors: the September return to school.

CASSA directors spoke of the many challenges this year and while most hoped for a smoother return this year, that was not the reality. Here are a few of our directives from the last meeting.

**Administration of Public Health Measures:** many spoke about the burden placed on systems and schools to administer rapid tests to staff and/or students. The administration included tracking, recording, and reporting the tests received by staff and students. Administering proof of vaccination was also cited as an administrative burden placed on systems and schools.

**Conflicting Messages:** while everyone spoke of an excellent relationship with their provincial/territorial or local public health units, there were times when political messaging frequently conflicted with medical messaging or evolved and changed making the provision of quality education very challenging.

**Staff Shortages:** there are some school districts whose geography overlaps more than one local public health unit with

different public health measures and messaging. Many board members identified the challenge of filling their administrative and/or teaching positions at this time.

**CASSA2022:** we plan to convene an in-person conference in St. Andrew’s By-The-Sea, New Brunswick. The conference will be held from July 6-8, 2022, at the beautiful Algonquin Resort. The theme is “Reimagining Education,” and we hope to begin to gather speaker and presentation proposals in early 2022. Visit the CASSA Conference website for further details (<http://conference.cassa-acgcs.ca>).

**Ken Bain**  
CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

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# Campaign to Combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation

**C**ASSA is pleased to be supporting a new national campaign to combat online child sexual exploitation (OCSE).

This campaign includes English- and French-language websites, marketing products that can be distributed in schools across the country and through stakeholder networks, and a digital ad campaign aimed at caregivers of school-aged children and youth. It was launched in March this year.

Most Canadian parents, guardians, and caregivers of school-aged children and youth have some awareness and knowledge about the issue, according to public opinion research conducted by Public Safety Canada in March 2020. However, only a small percentage of those surveyed believed the issue was relevant to their community. Only 12 per cent of parents and 9 per cent of the general population responding to the survey thought of OCSE as a major problem in their neighbourhood. Most respondents stated that OCSE was something that happened “somewhere else.”

This qualitative and quantitative research helped to determine what parts of the Canadian population needed to be the focus of a social marketing campaign to help raise awareness levels, knowledge, and public support to help protect children from online sexual exploitation. It highlighted opportunities to change the behaviour of Canadians by showing gaps in their understanding of the causes of OCSE and how to identify OCSE.

The immediate goal of this campaign is to help Canadian youth and caregivers increase their awareness of OCSE. It aims to help the target audience’s understanding that children who take part in sexting could be at risk for OCSE and that OCSE could be happening in their own homes.

The campaign’s long-term goal is to encourage people to report incidents of OCSE to [cybertip.ca](http://cybertip.ca), Canada’s national tip line for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children.

As part of the campaign, teacher toolkits and parent/caregiver resources have been developed and written for specific age groups. The initiative includes:

- teacher toolkits for youth aged 10 to 12
- teacher toolkits for youth aged 13 to 14

- teacher toolkits for youth aged 15 to 17
- resources for parents and caregivers of youth under 10
- resources for parents and caregivers of youth aged 10 to 12
- resources for parents and caregivers of youth aged 13 to 14
- resources for parents and caregivers of youth aged 15 to 17

Teacher and parent resources include fact sheets, booklets, posters, PowerPoint lessons with speaker notes, and videos. These cover topics such as online grooming, sexting, and descriptions of appropriate and inappropriate online behaviours. The resources also offer high-level advice to share with youth.

In March 2021 and again in July and August, 15- and 30-second ads for the campaign ran on media outlets such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Native Touch, CTV and CBC. These ads were aimed at parents and caregivers of youth aged 5 to 17. Digital banners and search engine marketing ads also ran during this first campaign.

To learn more about the campaign and to access teacher toolkits and parent resources, visit [Canada.ca/child-exploitation](http://Canada.ca/child-exploitation) or [Canada.ca/exploitation-enfants](http://Canada.ca/exploitation-enfants). ○

# *Faces in the Crowd*



## Pauline Clarke



**P**auline Clarke is the Chief Superintendent and CEO for Winnipeg School Division (WSD). She has served WSD as a Superintendent since 2008.

For over four decades, Pauline has dedicated herself to supporting and improving learning environments that are both culturally appropriate and productive for her students. Winnipeg School Division serves nearly 33,000 students, many of whom are from Indigenous (17 per cent) and newcomer (21 per cent) populations. Over 4,500 full-time staff support programming and operations in the division's 78 schools. Language programming is available in French, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Spanish, Cree, and Ojibwe.

Pauline was raised and educated in England and Singapore. She earned her teaching credentials from Homerton College in Cambridge and her Master of Education in educational administration from the University of Manitoba.

After finishing secondary school at age 17, she had to wait a year before starting college. She was hired as a full-time teacher, in part due to a shortage of teachers in England at the time. This was her first step in a long and rewarding career in public education. While working as a teacher at Lord Roberts Community School, an elementary school in Winnipeg, she was encouraged by her principal to apply for a position as a vice-principal. To her surprise, her application was accepted. She was later approached while working as a principal to be an Assistant Superintendent for WSD.

To Pauline, leadership means the ability to listen, make tough decisions, collaborate, and be clear about one's purpose. She believes children's learning and development always comes first, and that the work of senior system leaders is to support their staff and students' families in that goal.

Pauline's main focus as a senior administrator in public education has been to offer programming that supports student success

and achievement. Her ground-breaking work on inner city education has received acclaim from peers across the country and around the world. Pauline helped to develop world-renowned programming for students diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and initiated WSD's Learning Through the Arts program. She also played an essential role establishing the Children of the Earth High School, a high school that offers Indigenous-focused education in an urban setting, and Niji Mahkwa School, an elementary school that incorporates Indigenous language and teachings into its curriculum.

Her efforts over the years have extended well beyond supporting student learning and into developing strong school leaders, promoting professional development opportunities, and pursuing meaningful

partnerships with organizations in Winnipeg and across Canada to engage and help WSD students.

Pauline's other points of pride include co-publishing a series of books on Assessment for Learning with Ruth Sutton and the late Thompson Owens. The *Creating Independent Student Learners* series reflected work done in WSD's inner city schools. She's also proud of her work initiating policies that support Indigenous students at WSD schools as well as developing anti-homophobia policies. She has published numerous articles and presented at conferences in Canada and beyond.

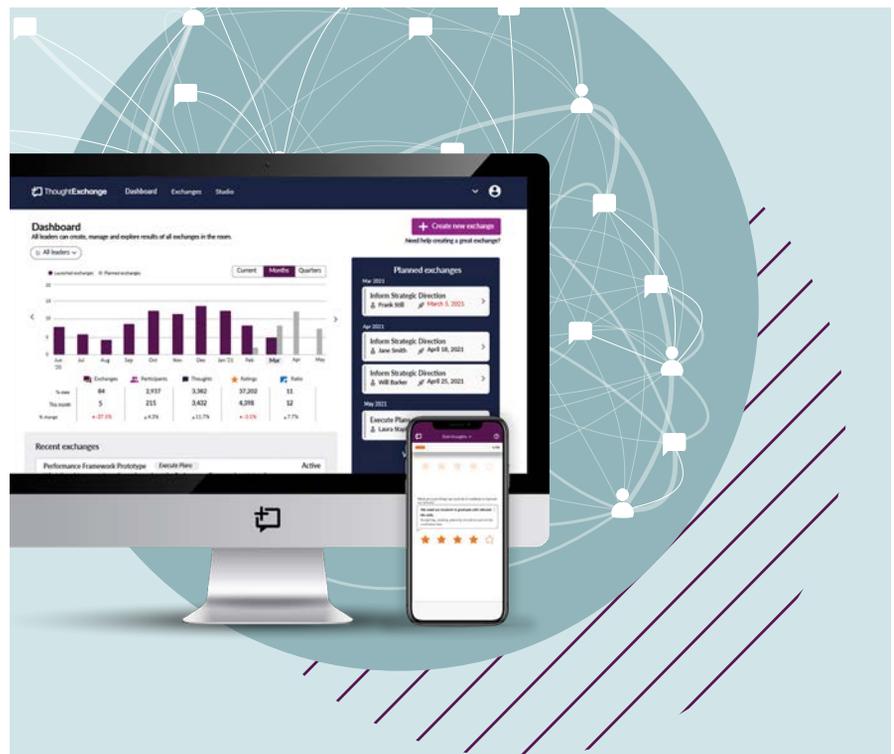
The many community boards and committees on which she has served include the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty, and Citizenship; Community Liaison Committee for the Canadian Science Centre for Human and Animal Health, Winnipeg (which includes the National Microbiology Laboratory); the United Way Campaign Cabinet; the President's Advisory Council of the University of Manitoba Advisory Committee on Indigenous Achievement; Mayor Brian Bowman's Winnipeg Promise Initiative; and the C21 Canada CEO Academy: Canadians for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning and Innovation. Pauline is also a member of the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council and a table officer of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS).

She is the current Co-President of MASS and a member of the CASSA Board of Directors. She notes that CASSA is an excellent forum for sharing ideas and perspectives from senior system leaders from across Canada. Pauline says she feels a national voice on education is more critical than ever, and CASSA can position itself to offer advice through the lens of experience.

In 2005, Pauline was recognized with Winnipeg's Woman of Distinction Award by the YMCA-YWCA for her service to education, training, and development. Several years later in 2012, she was awarded the Order of Manitoba for her work in education.

In her spare time, Pauline enjoys gardening, reading mysteries and other novels, visiting museums, and travel. She's interested in textiles, art, and music, and has a deep love for airplanes: observing them, collecting models, and visiting aircraft museums around the world. ○

**Her efforts over the years have extended well beyond supporting student learning and into developing strong school leaders, promoting professional development opportunities, and pursuing meaningful partnerships with organizations in Winnipeg and across Canada to engage and help WSD students.**



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# Faces in the Crowd



## Colleen Russell-Rawlins



**C**olleen Russell-Rawlins is the new Director of Education for the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). She was appointed to this position by board trustees in early August 2021 following a lengthy, in-depth search.

Colleen is the first Black woman to permanently lead the TDSB, the largest public school board in Canada. TDSB is also one of the largest and most diverse boards in North America. Nearly a quarter of its students were born outside of Canada, and there are over 120 languages spoken by TDSB students and their families. The board serves 247,000 students at 583 schools.

Colleen's connection to these schools goes deep. As a student, she attended George P. Mackie Public School, Alexmuir Public School, Henry Kelsey Public School, and Albert Campbell Collegiate, all schools within the former Scarborough Board of Education and now with the TDSB. She earned her post-secondary degrees in the

Toronto area, earning a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education, and Master of Education from York University.

Her career as a professional educator and leader includes time as a teacher, principal, and superintendent with the TDSB. She also served as Executive Associate Director with the TDSB. From 2020 to 2021, Colleen was the interim Director of Education with the nearby Peel District School Board (PDSB). This was also a ground-breaking moment in public education in Canada—Colleen was the first woman in the history of PDSB to hold this position.

Colleen's service in leadership extends to the provincial level, as she served on the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association Board of Directors for four years. From 2018 to 2019, she was OPSOA's President. Her years-long commitment to public education and student success includes extensive work in pursuing equity and anti-racism, leadership development, early learning, and mathematics. In 2020, she was recognized as one of the 100 Accomplished Black Women in Canada.

Recently Colleen generously took the time to respond to questions from *Leaders & Learners* about her journey in leadership and education.

**In a press release on your recent appointment as the Director of Education for the Toronto District School Board, you noted how humbling it is for you to return as Director of Education for the schools you attended as a student. Thinking back to those younger years, what do you remember thinking you'd like to be when you grew up?**

I grew up in Scarborough where I attended school as a student. I had a deep love of chemistry and biology, which, combined with my interest in working with children, led me to first consider medicine as a career path.

But ultimately it was a high school co-operative education program that exposed me to teaching, speech and language pathology, and child psychology where I gained experience—and a passion—for the many possibilities of a career serving children within education.

### **What inspired you to work in public education and to work in senior administration in the public system?**

Teaching students every day is an immense privilege because of the potential to have a lasting and positive impact on students' lives. My career outside of the classroom emerged because I welcomed the opportunity to take on new challenges, both formal and informal, and to serve where I was needed.

In addition to being a teacher, I have had the unique pleasure of many different roles in public education including consultant, principal, superintendent, and student achievement officer, and within a variety of portfolios including literacy, mathematics, leadership, human resources, early years, and mental health and well-being.

In each of these roles, I had the opportunity to learn from mentors, which expanded my professional capacities and allowed me to contribute positively to student and teacher learning and development.

### **How would you describe your personal style of leadership? What does leadership mean to you?**

My professional North Star has always focused my efforts on creating an education system where students' identities do not predict their outcomes or experiences in school. My leadership model, as a result, is about ethical service that recognizes the potential in people and brings them together to deliver bold changes to address current and future needs. To that end, I am committed to continuously improving my leadership as a student-focused, courageous, informed, inclusive, and empathetic leader.

### **What does it mean to lead Canada's largest school board in a pandemic?**

The pandemic has added obvious complexities and urgency for all leaders in public education across the country. It has required us all as leaders to embrace the paradoxes that are inherent in a crisis—feelings of anxiety versus optimism and/or surviving versus thriving—and use both to inform our plans and decisions. Effective leadership in Toronto

requires an understanding of the inequities that have been confirmed or revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic and to be responsive in ways that differ from the past.

### **Tell us about a program or initiative that you led or collaborated on in your current or previous school board that you are particularly proud of that resulted in notable and positive change. What are some of your personal points of pride as a senior administrator in public education in Toronto, in Ontario and in Canada?**

I am deeply proud of the launch of The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, the first of its kind in public education in Canada, in the Toronto District School Board. The centre, which officially and virtually opened its doors in June 2021, is a monumental step forward for the TDSB in investing in a place of hope, agency, and action for Black students, their families, staff, and allies. As a system, demanding that more be done to eradicate anti-Black racism, this centre is an action that has the potential to help us dismantle anti-Black racism within the school board and improve both experiences and outcomes for Black students.

In my work in the Early Years program in the TDSB, I focused efforts on building the TDSB's before and after school programs, which serve thousands of students each day. The continuation of learning in these programs while supporting students and their families with quality care is invaluable and a true point of pride for me.

Finally, in my time as Director in the Peel District School Board, I led the establishment of a Student Equity Advisory Committee. Hearing directly from our students about their learning and school experiences is vital for us to make informed and meaningful decisions to better support them. This committee brings together students in Grades 7 to 11 who are passionate about sharing leadership and developing action plans to help guide conversations, consider new perspectives, and make impactful changes that support students across the board.

### **In 2020, you were named one of the 100 Accomplished Black Women in Canada. What did this recognition mean to you?**

It is a truly special recognition to be included in the legacy of remarkable Black Canadian women who have contributed to

the advancement of Black women and girls in Canada. This recognition reflects the many women in my family and friends who have invested in and inspired my development both personally and professionally.

It also serves as a motivation to challenge the limited definition of leadership and the often-negative image and reception of Indigenous, Black, racialized, Muslim, 2SLGBTQI, and other identities that are underrepresented in the leadership of public education and other sectors. It is incumbent upon me and those in senior leadership roles to eliminate the barriers to leadership faced by so many, so that each individual can show their identity wholeheartedly and be treated with dignity and respect.

### **Please tell our readers a little bit about your personal history. What do you find recharging or relaxing when you are away from work?**

I am grateful to be inspired and supported by a large and loving multi-generational family. I have benefitted from their diversity of interests and advice. It has been particularly difficult for me to have been physically separated from them during the many phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, but over the past 18 months our connections have evolved from online gatherings to more frequent phone calls, chats, and when appropriate physically distant outdoor activities such as picnics or hiking.

The pandemic has forced us all to pay attention to our well-being. For me, it has given me the opportunity to rediscover a previous hobby of studying the history of neighbourhoods. I love getting out on a hiking trail, taking photographs, and doing yoga. I have been part of the same book club for nearly 20 years, which has also brought me great joy from the stories we have read and the deep bonds of friendship it has created.

### **Finally, what advice would you give to the next generation of leaders?**

"You are the designer of your own journey and the author of your own story" (author unknown). This quote resonates for me because I have always felt strongly about defining my own lived experience and identity rather than leaving it to others to do so. We should never accept the inevitability of the status quo and believe we get what we deserve. The quote reminds me to remember that I have personal agency. I strive to create schools that teach students that they have agency too. ○



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## Mark Your Calendars for CASSA's Annual Conference in 2022!

**July 6-8, 2022**

**St. Andrew's By-The-Sea, New Brunswick**

The CASSA Annual Conference is hoping to meet in-person in beautiful St. Andrews By-The-Sea in 2022. It is going to be an amazing way to re-connect school system leaders from across Canada to learn and share information on current topics in education. We hope you'll join us!

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*The theme for 2022 is  
reimagining education.*

*Make sure to save the date!*

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