

Leaders & Learners



CASSA-ACGCS
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

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**WE WISH YOU A
HAPPY AND
HEALTHY 2016!**

Message from the President: Wellness in the School System

AS WINTER SETS in and the holidays approach, our thoughts often turn to wellness, both for our staff and our students. Media reports abound with statistics about the need to attend to matters of physical and mental health, the lack of services, particularly for youth, and the dire long-term consequences when physical and mental problems are left untreated.

For example, the Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that one in five people will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime (www.cmha.ca).

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), more than two thirds of young adults facing a mental health problem report that their symptoms first appeared in childhood, signalling an urgent need for increased prevention and early intervention.

Yet data show that most children do not receive any intervention for their mental health problems.



Cindy Finn
President

Increasingly, we are aware of the interplay between wellness and learning. When students struggle with mental health problems, we know that the impact on their academic progress and social well-being is significant. Thus it is no surprise that educators have started to focus attention on this important issue of student mental health.

The news, however, is not all negative. Mental health problems and disorders can be successfully treated and managed, the earlier the better. Schools have long been recognized as a setting conducive to large-scale prevention and targeted intervention. Initiatives can be successfully implemented to address the social-emotional well-being of students.

As a national organization that seeks to be a voice on educational issues, CASSA has had a long-standing interest in youth mental

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OUR PURPOSE

CASSA is the Canadian organization of school system leaders that promotes and supports quality education for the success of all students.

OUR MISSION

CASSA strengthens the capacity of school system leaders and influences the directions that impact education and student learning.

Message from the Executive Director: CASSA's Expanding Reach and Influence in 2015

ON BEHALF OF your board of directors, I wish you a happy holiday season and new year!

CASSA continues to expand its reach and influence at national and international conferences and symposia. This past year, CASSA was a guest at the International Symposium on the Teaching Profession; the Ontario Principals' Council International Symposium on System Change through School Leadership; the CEA National Conference on Dropping Out: What the Neurosciences Can Teach Us; and the North American Leaders Forum: Integrating Health & Social Programs within Education Systems. We also contributed to the white paper

"Integrating Health Within the Core Mandates, Constraints and Concerns of Education Systems: Policies for Progress and Sustainability" that will be published soon. CASSA has supported other conferences and initiatives as well, including the Annual Summit on Education Technology Strategies, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Annual Conference and Future Leaders in All Professions.

What better time to examine practices across Canada in social justice and social responsibility. Join us in Winnipeg at our 2016



Ken Bain
Executive Director

conference as we engage in discussions and presentations. Our first keynote speaker has been confirmed: **Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish**. He has dedicated his life to peace efforts in the Middle East. The call for other presenters will be sent out in early January.

Lastly, in February I will join CASSA President **Cindy Finn** at the 2016 AASA-The School Superintendents' Association National Conference on Education. At that time we will celebrate with our AASA colleagues the exemplary leadership of Canada's Superintendent of the Year, **John Crocco**. Please email me if you plan to be at the AASA conference.

Message from the President: Wellness in the School System, continued

Continued from page 1

health. CASSA was also an active member of the School-Based Mental Health and Substance Abuse consortium, a 40-member team of researchers, practitioners and educators working under the auspices of the MHCC. In 2013, this group issued a report on the state of school-based mental health in Canada with five recommendations for further action.

In 2015, the CASSA board of directors identified that further work needs to be done in this area and began sharing resources from our respective provinces

and territories. In February 2016, the board of directors will meet for a two-day strategic planning meeting in Toronto, and this topic will be a major feature of our discussions.

One of the advantages of a national organization such as ours is the potential for influencing change on a systemic level; it is our desire to harness that potential and make a meaningful impact that will benefit the well-being of all students, particularly those who are most vulnerable. It will be exciting to share our work in this area with you in the coming months.

Best wishes to all in the new year!

Faces in the Crowd: Profiles of Leaders

Michelle Brennick is the Deputy Superintendent of Northern Gateway Public Schools in Whitecourt, Alberta. From 2007 to 2008, she served as the district's Assistant Superintendent. The year before that, she was its Director of Learning Services. Her leadership career began with the Calgary Separate School District, where she was an assistant principal and vice principal between 2002 and 2006.

Michelle earned two bachelor degrees: a Bachelor of Science at St. Francis Xavier University and a Bachelor of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University, both in Nova Scotia. She took additional coursework at the University of Calgary and then earned her Master of Arts (2004) from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.



Michelle Brennick

Michelle is the Zone 2/3 Director for the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS). She's also attended CASSA conferences and co-authored articles for the national organization.

Michelle enjoys training for and taking part in half marathons, duathlons and triathlons. Her volunteer commitments include taking part in the Fallen Four Relay Run, which honours the sacrifice made by four police officers in Mayerthorpe, Alberta, in 2005. She also participates in St. Joseph Parish ministries. She enjoys travelling, reading and spending

time with family. For years, Michelle also supported her youngest sister's work as the Cape Breton/Nova Scotia advocate representative for VATTa, the Voices At The Table for Advocacy, which is a national self-advocacy group of adults with Down syndrome.

The Year in Review: Theresa Harris Shares the OCSOA Perspective

What are the most positive developments you saw in 2015 in your regional organization?

A highlight of 2015 for the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA) was our AGM at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto from April 15 to 17. Attendance was the highest ever and a central celebration at the banquet was the recognition of former Ontario

Premier **William Davis** as an Honourary Member of OCSOA. In 1984, then-Premier Davis courageously announced the intent to extend full funding to grades 11, 12 and 13 (OAC) in Catholic schools.

OCSOA's Mentor-Coaching Program for newly appointed supervisory officers and directors of education continues to support our new members as they transition into their new roles. A side benefit to this program is the relationships developed between the mentee and the active mentor as well as the learning about other school boards.

What were the biggest challenges your regional organization faced in 2015?

The biggest challenge for our OCSOA supervisory officers in 2015 was the negotiation of multiple collective bargaining agreements for this fall. The accompanying job action resulted in significant stressors for our school and system administrators to ensure a safe and productive experience for students.

What are the biggest challenges you see for OCSOA and CASSA in 2016?

While there will always be challenges, experience has demonstrated that the opportunities for growth that



The Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association team at the 2015 CASSA conference in Montreal. Executive Director Theresa Harris is third from the left in the front row.

are presented will strengthen our provincial and national associations. Collaboration and collegiality are outgrowths of the collective responses to challenges, and I'm confident that OCSOA and CASSA will continue to foster the relationships that benefit our supervisory officers and the school systems they serve.

What were the highlights of the 2015 conference?

The speakers and workshop presenters were top notch. Of course, the selection of OCSOA's EXL nominee, John Crocco, Director of Education for the Niagara Catholic District School Board, as the 2015 recipient of the national award was a major highlight.

What would make CASSA an even stronger national voice for Canadian school system leaders in 2016?

CASSA should continue to encourage the sharing of successful practices through the annual conference. A winter Strategic Action planning session for the board of directors is critical to focus the efforts of the association and build the relationships that underpin the shared learning.

Theresa Harris is the Executive Director of OCSOA. She retires at the end of 2015. We wish her all the best.

Conference Update: Start Planning for Winnipeg

IT'S HARD TO believe but we are already at the halfway point to the annual CASSA conference. The 2016 theme is "Hearts and Minds: Creating a Culture of Caring." The conference will take place from July 7 to 9 at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

CASSA's mission is to strengthen the capacity of school system leaders and influence the directions that impact education and student learning. The annual conference helps this mission by offering school system leaders from across Canada the opportunity to come together and exchange ideas and best practices.

The conference also features two special events: the EXL Awards and the Partners Dinner.

EXL Awards

CASSA members who have shown exemplary leadership ability and who have enhanced school administration are eligible to receive the EXL Award. Winners also receive an honorary life membership in CASSA. Distinguished Service Awards may also be given out at this time. Details of the EXL Award, including nomination forms, can be found on the CASSA website. We are grateful for the continued support of this award by Xerox Canada.

Partners Dinner

CASSA has enjoyed many rewarding partnerships with its conference sponsors and exhibitors over the years. Since 2010, CASSA has recognized the importance of these partnerships and hosted a dinner in which sponsors and CASSA executive are able to develop and strengthen relationships with one another.

With up to 16 hours of sunlight and average daytime temperatures in the mid-20s during July, Winnipeg offers a great setting for a summer conference.



Winnipeg

Highlights of a visit to this prairie city include

- the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (humanrights.ca)
- the Assiniboine Park Zoo (assiniboineparkzoo.ca)
- the Forks National Historic Site (theforks.com)
- the Winnipeg Art Gallery (wag.ca)
- the Exchange District National Historic Site (exchangedistrict.org)
- the Royal Canadian Mint (mint.ca)

Look in upcoming issues of the *Leaders & Learners* newsletter and on the CASSA conference website (conference.cassa-acgcs.ca) for details and registration packages. Online registration will also be available as we get closer to the conference dates.

Bring your team to Winnipeg this year for three days of information, breakout sessions, keynotes and fun networking events!



Remember When: The New CASSA Conference Memories Page

DO YOU REMEMBER the great times CASSA conference delegates had in Whitehorse in 2007? How about Toronto in 2006 or St. John's in 2013?

Thanks to the new Memories section of our conference website, CASSA members can relive highlights of our annual gatherings through an online collection of photographs.

Ken Bain, CASSA's Executive Director and a veteran of many conferences, thought the time was right for such a retrospective after reviewing the photos from the 2015 conference.

"The Memories section is meant to provide CASSA delegates with the chance to recall the many wonderful annual conference experiences they enjoyed," he says.

"The locations of the conference over the years, from Whistler, British

Columbia, in the west and St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, in the east to Whitehorse, Yukon, in the north and Niagara Falls, Ontario, in the south underscore the pan-Canadian reach and influence that CASSA has enjoyed," he adds.

Rick Meridew, CASSA's behind-the-scenes tech wizard, created the page. Rick is the President of LakesideIT, a boutique firm providing integrated programming, web and accounting services to clients in Canada, the US and Europe.

The Memories page can be found at <http://conference.cassa-acgcs.ca/CASSA-memories.html>. As well as photos, the Memories page also includes short write-ups detailing the highlights of each conference, including awards and social outings.

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