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Upcoming Events

- Registration and check-in for the CASA 2010 Annual Conference starts at 1pm on July 8 at the Loews Hôtel Le Concorde in Quebec City.
- The CASA Executive/Annual General Meeting takes place at 1pm on July 8 in the Loews Board Room. All members are welcome to attend.
- More details are at www.casa-acas.ca.

Message From The President: The Importance Of The Arts In Education

I find it quite remarkable to rely on Plato to summarize clearly and effectively thoughts on the importance of arts education. He wrote, "I would teach children music, physics and philosophy: but most importantly music, for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys of learning."



Carol Gray
CASA president

Most of us can certainly give unqualified support to his statements and many of us can recall the time when music began each classroom day. We learned and sang together the national anthem and may have even included a hymn or two as part of "opening exercises"! As the years progressed, full vocal and instrumental music programs flourished; fine arts and dance took their rightful places in schools as did photography and multimedia.

Although the new Quebec Education Program has placed restrictions on the number of options available to students at the high school level, a compulsory arts component appears through most of the secondary curriculum.

In addition, an increasing number of our elementary schools and all of our secondary schools offer instrumental music programs. At local, provincial, national and interna-

tional level competitions, our students earn high honours, routinely placing among the top in their field. Throughout our board, music students have been spotlighted at cultural events across the province. Every year, our bands hold centre stage at the Montreal International Jazz Festival, Place des Arts and Quebec Musicfest. Dance is ever more popular, and our fine arts classes are producing brilliant work, adorning school hallways and those of head office with examples of outstanding achievement by students and teachers.

For the past seven years, secondary students at the Lester B. Pearson School Board have worked together to create a professional, entertaining and thoroughly enjoyable production. TOPS (Truly Outstanding Pearson Show) is so much more than a talent show; it is an initiative that promotes the building of leadership skills, self-confidence, time management and a strong work ethic. The students come together from every high school in the board to build this production from the ground up.

Although supported financially by the board, every aspect of TOPS is created by students for students. They, in fact, define

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Message From The Executive Director: The Arts Are A Significant Part Of Student Development

When I was principal of a large secondary school in the 1980s, we had a marvelous arts program with sensational, involving drama productions each year and a full supportive program of music, including choral and strings. The heart of the program was a combination of dynamic drama and music teachers who worked together to make students and consequently the lower middle-class community believe that this was important learning.

We were also an aggressive sports school, winning several city championships. It was important to note that many of our finest athletes were also keen participants in drama and music. The school developed a culture of participation and showing its strengths back to the community.

There were no extra grants to support the arts or sports in that school; we didn't need any. Everyone joined together to make these skills important and to recognize the talents we had.

I am a firm believer that good programs in the arts develop because teachers and administrators believe in the significance of skill and performance. Schools must recognize and build on talent and encourage opportunities to give prominence to music, drama, dance and sports.

Over the past few years, there has been an emphasis on increasing scores in literacy and numeracy to show achievement gains for our students measured against international standards. We have neglected consideration of the arts as a

significant part of student development. Additional resources have not been placed in the arts or in sports.

Isn't it interesting that our country still turns out fantastic musicians and excellent athletes! Students are still drawn to the arts and are willing to work at developing skills in many areas.

In a time of restraint, it is not likely that there will be an influx of funds for the arts in the near future. What can be provided is support and encouragement from senior administrators. And this does not cost dollars. Superintendents and directors should make these programs a priority and speak to them on various occasions. Board communications should promote the value and the successes of programs in the arts and in sports.

Let's make prominent the good work of our skilled students and let everyone know that this is what makes good education and valuable citizens.

I hope to see many of you at the 2010 CASA Annual Conference in Quebec City this July!



Frank Kelly
CASA executive director

Message From The President, continued

(Continued from page 1)

their own extended learning environment outside of the classroom. The result is an annual show that astounds audiences and firmly establishes the performing arts at Lester B. Pearson School Board as essential and ever-evolving.

The fact that arts programs in public and private schools are endangered flies contrary to the known and measurable advantages that accrue to those who include the arts in their course of study: improved test scores, improved problem-solving skills, increased cooperative skills, more effective evaluative and analytical skills, and increased self-esteem. In a significant number of cases, we know that arts and music programs are essential to engaging students and to retaining many in school.

With these as benefits, we must exert all our creativity to support and encourage the continued development of the arts within our schools.

On a personal note, I am looking forward to meeting you in July at CASA's Annual Conference in Quebec City. You're sure to enjoy the speakers and social activities as much as I have enjoyed my time as president of CASA this past year

I wish you all a relaxing and healthy summer, and "Bonne vacances"!



Oh, the
summer night
Has a smile of light
And she sits upon a
sapphire throne.
—Barry Cornwall

Focus On Arts Programming In Public Education: HWDSB's Itinerant Strings Program

There are many arts programming success stories in school districts across Canada. In this issue of *Leaders & Learners*, we take a closer look at the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's Itinerant Strings Program, an amazing music program that has been running for more than 30 years.

Scott Sincerbox, superintendent of education, and **Lisa Neale**, principal of Community and Continuing Education, discuss the program's roots, the source of its success and the importance of supporting arts programming in public education. The decision to run the program through HWDSB's Community and Continuing Education department means students from anywhere in Hamilton can take part. CCE offers a range of programming, from summer school and night school to adult credit programs to international languages programs, and serves over 15,000 students a year. The Itinerant Strings Program typically serves around 400 students each year.

For more information on the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, visit www.hwdsb.on.ca.



One of over 400 students who participate each year in the HWDSB Itinerant Strings Program.

Photos courtesy HWDSB

By Tara Lee Wittchen
editor
Leaders & Learners

It all started with a single violin. Thirty-three years ago, one teacher began taking a violin around to a few schools in Hamilton to share with young students the joy of making music.

In the years that followed, and with strong support from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, parents and the community, the HWDSB's Itinerant Strings Program has grown magnificently. These days, four itinerant (or roving) music teachers visit 50 schools in the district to teach students in grades 4 to 8 how to play the violin, viola, cello and bass.

"It was sort of a grassroots movement," says HWDSB superintendent of education **Scott Sincerbox**. "It was a number of folks who had a love for the strings, a love for the music, and they wanted to bring music to children in a way that was accessible, that was affordable, and that took the passion they had for strings and conveyed that to the kids."

The Strings Instruction Program offers face-to-face classroom-based group lessons 33 times throughout the school year. Each group has only six to eight students, which means the students get an extraordinary

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**I wonder what it
would be like to live
in a world where it
was always June.**
—L. M. Montgomery

Focus On Arts Programming In Public Education: HWDSB's Itinerant Strings Program, continued

(Continued from page 3)

amount of instructor attention as they learn their instrument. The instruments are provided and maintained by HWDSB. They are also properly sized for each student, says **Lisa Neale**, principal of Community and Continuing Education (which has responsibility for the Strings Program) at HWDSB. As well as the small group lessons, the program also includes 33 orchestra practices.

"I think that's what makes this program unique," says Lisa. "The students have an opportunity on a regular, ongoing basis to work with the experience of an orchestra. The 33 lessons that transpire in the group lesson scenario are during the week and that can be embedded in the instructional day. Then on Saturday, or sometimes it's one night a week, we bring the students together into three different orchestras throughout the city to get that orchestra feel and to practise as an ensemble. That's very authentic and real for them."

These lessons and practices lead to three celebration concerts in winter and spring. The big event is the annual Festival of Strings concert in March, where three ensembles—The East Hamilton Strings, The West Hamilton Strings and The New City Strings—perform individually and also as one massive orchestra.

At this year's Festival of Strings, 469 string students from more than 40 elementary schools were joined by several orchestra players from two high schools in the large orchestra. The 2010 concert included both classical and popular arrangements (such as an all-strings version of Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven").

"If you look at the actual program itself, if you look at the Festival of Strings, the calibre of talent is unbelievable," says Scott. "The performances are very high quality and the pride that the students have, the parents in the audience, the staff members, it's really quite impressive."

Some of these students, Scott adds, may be involved with lessons or orchestra above and beyond the Strings

Program and will likely choose to carry that passion on.

"It's a great jumping-off point," he says, "and yes, some kids do go on to study music in college or university, and certainly in high school."

It's important to note that students don't need to have any musical training to take part, says Lisa. "They can just come in fresh and interested," she explains.

"It really is incredible what the instructors do with them," Scott adds.

How it starts, Lisa continues, is each year the strings instructors go around to the schools and gather the kids in grades 2 and 3 for a recruitment assembly. Then they look for any student who is beginning in grade 4 and wants to take part. All children attending HWDSB schools are eligible for the program; no pre-testing is required for acceptance. Though it is an extracurricular program, high school students are eligible to earn a half-credit for the program's orchestra component.



Scott Sincerbox
superintendent of education
Hamilton-Wentworth District
School Board

"This is a program that is valued by the students, staff and community."

"It is a very inclusive program, grades 4 to 8, and we still even look at the high school students

who want to experience the orchestra on Saturdays," she says. "They can still participate in that. We also have students in transition. They go into high school, they finish high school and then the most amazing thing that happens is many of these students head off to university to specialize in music, then come back and volunteer with the orchestra. There really is a sense of commitment and I'm going to say family to this program."

While it isn't free, the program is quite affordable for the quantity and quality of
(Continued on page 5)

**Oh, bring again my
heart's content,
Thou Spirit of the
Summer-time!**
—William Allingham

Focus On Arts Programming In Public Education: HWDSB's Itinerant Strings Program, continued

(Continued from page 4)

lessons. Families who sign up for the early bird rate (before June 30 of the preceding school year) pay \$295 per student; the regular rate is \$325. Lessons start in early September and are held at the same time each week at the students' home schools. There is no additional charge for the orchestra practices.

"I think what happens is since it is offered in a public education venue, we're looking at keeping it extremely affordable for families...sustainable yet affordable. We also try to embed it into the instructional day whenever possible, not let it be disruptive to the students' learning," Lisa says.

That adds such a positive convenience for parents with busy lives, she continues.

"Who wouldn't love to know their child on Wednesdays between 8:45 and 9:15 is getting music instruction in a small group scenario, and then they head out to their orchestra practice on Saturday, and it leads to this culminating activity of a Festival of Strings where they go to Hamilton Place and see their child on a stage participating in an orchestra? It's a life experience!"



Lisa Neale
principal of Community and
Continuing Education
HWDSB

Not all students participate in the weekend/weeknight orchestra opportunity because of other commitments in their family, but most do.

"We like to see that as part of it," she says, "because what I'm hearing from the instructors is that is what really brings the experience together, when you get together and practise as an ensemble leading up to the orchestra performance at the Festival of Strings."

"There really is a sense of commitment and family to this program."

ble leading up to the orchestra performance at the Festival of Strings."

A great deal of credit for the program's success must go to the instructors who have taught the children over the years, says Scott.

"They are so talented and passionate about strings and about the program," he says. "Essentially what these folks have done over the course of the past number of years is they've created in the schools—particularly of note would be some of our inner city schools—an appreciation for music and for strings. The kids receive a very, very high calibre of instruction in violins, violas and so on."

Lisa adds her praise, calling them a "small but mighty and professional group of instructors."

Of course, the program may not have lasted as long as it has if it did not have support

from the HWDSB administrative team. That support, says Scott, is just another example of the board offering programs that engage students and give them opportunities to pursue something that supports them in reaching their full potential.

"It's another example of equity of access. The program can engage students from communities where students may not have those opportunities outside of the school to have the calibre of instruction that they get."

School staff, who offer flexibility to accommodate time for music instruction and attend concerts alongside parents and community members, also contribute to the success of the Itinerant Strings Program.

"This is a program that is valued by the students, staff and community in the HWDSB," says Scott.

**What is so rare as a
day in June? Then, if
ever, come perfect
days.**
—James Russell
Lowell

CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd



Michelle Brennick
Alberta

After graduating from St. Francis Xavier University in 1983, Michelle earned her Education degree from Mount Saint Vincent University in 1986 and her M. A. in Administration and Supervision from Gonzaga University (Washington) in 2004.

Known as a dynamic and engaging educator, she was a teacher and school-based administrator for 22 years, mostly in Alberta. She was committed to her students' dreams while challenging them to be strategic, focused and innovative in their pursuits. In 2006, Michelle moved to Northern Gateway Public Schools, where she has served as director of learning services, assistant superintendent and now deputy superintendent. At NGPS, she has been instrumental in supporting and enhancing student learning through her focused dedication to capacity building and quality teaching.



Bernie Giacobbo
Alberta

Bernie is the associate superintendent of Aspen View Regional School Division in Athabasca, a title he has held since 2006. Before this, he served as chief deputy superintendent for Aspen View and as a school principal. Bernie began his career as a phys. ed. teacher in 1977.

He received his B. Ed. at the University of Alberta and his M. Ed. from Western Washington University in Bellingham. He has also received his National Staff Development Academy and Educational and School System Leadership certificates, as well as certificates in coaching and firefighting. He has coached many hockey and baseball teams, and in 1989 was named the Coach of the Year by the town of Lac La Biche.

Bernie is active in hockey, curling, slo-pitch and golf. He and his wife Kirsti have four grown children.



Michael Hauptman
Alberta

Michael became the new deputy superintendent of Evergreen Catholic Separate Regional Division in Spruce Grove this past March. He has worked as an educator in both rural and urban settings, and has experienced education from within public schools and government. Prior to his appointment, he had served as a teacher, counsellor, resource facilitator, principal and school trustee, and was senior education manager at Alberta Education at the time of his appointment.

He earned his Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta and his Masters of Education from the University of Lethbridge.

Michael is married to Marie Gammache-Hauptman, the principal of a Catholic school in St. Albert. They have three children and two grandchildren.

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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.