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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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## Upcoming Events

- The 2011 CASA Annual Conference takes place from July 7 to 10 at the Niagara Falls Hotel-Crowne Plaza Fallsview in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Have you signed up your team yet? Registration packages and agendas are at [www.casa-acas.ca](http://www.casa-acas.ca).

## Message From The President: Preparing And Planning For The Future

**A**s school administrators from across Canada transition from the Canadian winter that was this year and spring forward to glorious spring in school districts, administrators are in the throes of preparing, planning and projecting for the coming school year, even before this one has concluded.

Preparing for planning occupies the time, energy and focus of school administrators who are continually dealing with internal and external issues affecting the learning and achievement of students.

Planning also includes incorporating the core values, beliefs, goals and objectives of the school system by preparing detailed strategic plans that can be realized through available finances to meet the needs of all students in a school district. Each school district has its own unique priorities, and by annually redefining and revitalizing the strategies that are required to meet these priorities, school districts can spring ahead with the support of the community.

The concept of revitalizing a school district with the involvement of their communities is not a new idea. However, with each attempt at revitalization, new challenges are presented for school administrators. These chal-



Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells  
CASA president

lenges are for school administrators to solve with all school and community partners working together in a positive way.

Revitalization involves actions of rebirth, renewal and reactivation, all of which become the responsibility of school administrators working in concert with their communities. Many school districts across Canada are in the renovation and rebuilding phases. Older buildings are being retrofitted

and updated, and new schools are being constructed to provide state-of-the-art learning environments with the latest technology and environmental standards to create efficiencies for the district, school, students, staff and local communities.

Furthermore, the concept of the local community school as the "hub" or the centre of the community presents interesting discussions between school districts, school administrators and members of the community, who not only look to the school as the place of education for their students but also as a place for families and the community for their activities.

Thus, any form of revitalization in any area, be it staffing or new and modified facilities, requires planning, research and development, and the invitation of community input

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Message From The Executive Director: The Benefits Of Long-Range Planning For Administrators

This is the time of year when school districts concentrate on planning: staffing for new numbers and making arrangements for additional and modified facilities. There is an anxiety about provincial budgets and the assets needed to support school district plans.

Many districts are facing declining enrollment; some are contending with significant growth. Both situations place demands on the strategic insights of the senior administrator.

A great number of our Canadian schools are older structures. Some have reached the end of their usefulness and repairing is not productive. Replacing or modifying can be a lengthy exercise.

Changing the nature of a school in a community can become an emotional activity, and those administrators who have closed a community school know the trauma that goes with the process. When a board makes such a decision, it will have analyzed the service to students and committed to a better model of delivery. The community may not always agree.

Some senior administrators do very effective long-range planning in their districts. They analyze their inventory in detail, studying its capacity and its effectiveness. They look at the full picture of the needs and the resources available in the community and make change based on revitalizing. They do not act on the small isolated picture. They bring forward a long-range plan showing improvement and benefits into the future.

Based on models we have seen across Canada, there would appear to be a few significant actions that the senior administrator should take:

## Message From The President, continued

*(Continued from page 1)*

by school districts. It also entails commitments from governments and creative partnerships between community members and school districts so that all members of the community, particularly students and their families, can benefit from the revitalization.

When schools as “hubs” are revitalized in their neighbourhoods to include spaces such as child care, recreational and multipurpose facilities, the school district supports students

- Maintain a study of the needs and holdings of the whole system
- Conceptualize all aspects of effective delivery of education to the community
- Develop a model of full revitalization
- Discuss revitalization with the board and with municipal leaders
- Consolidate a vision of how the community will be when changes are made; this includes buildings and services
- Communicate the vision clearly



Frank Kelly  
CASA executive director

This is a time of great change in learning and in how students access programs. There will be major adjustments to come in the next few years. Administrators at the system level must take changes into account as they plan for the future. It is no longer acceptable to simply replace one school with another. New developments must provide for a more comprehensive use within the community and they must reflect the changing nature of learning and the economy.

CASA members have proven to be effective leaders of revitalization. I invite members to share success stories in our national newsletter.

and their families learning and growing together to make a better community for all.

CASA members continue to provide leadership in their school districts and communities as they revitalize their districts and “spring ahead” toward improving their districts for all students and their communities.



## Addressing Youth Suicide In Thunder Bay: An Integrated Community And School Response

At the 2010 CASA Conference, the topic of youth suicide was addressed in a presentation about the Thunder Bay Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force. Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board superintendent of education **Rob Kruse** was on hand to share information on his board's participation in the task force. The session covered not only the community's response to a string of youth suicides but the response of the schools in the community as well.

Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board incorporates 16 elementary, 3 senior elementary and 2 secondary schools. It has been involved in the task force since phase 1. The board advocated for the Rapid Response Fan-Out Protocol within its own school board, organized a presentation by the task force on the protocol to school administration of the senior elementary and high schools, and advocated for the protocol to the school board trustees. As well, the TBCDSB hosted the signing ceremony of the task force's Memorandum of Agreement at one of its high schools, allowed focus groups on youth suicide prevention to be conducted at two Catholic high schools and is a member of the task force's executive committee.

The article that appears in this issue of *Leaders & Learners*, with the exception of Kruse's comments, has been condensed from material in the *Thunder Bay Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force Phase 3 Final Report* and *Youth Voice: A Report on the Views Expressed by Youth on How Thunder Bay Can Prevent Youth Suicide*, both published in 2010. For copies of these reports or more information on the task force and the role of Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, contact Rob Kruse by phone at 1 (807) 625-1590 or by email at rkruse@tbcdsb.on.ca.

**I**n Canada, suicide is the second-highest cause of death for youth aged 10 to 24. One in five children in the province of Ontario struggles with their mental health. Suicide rates of Aboriginal people are six to seven times higher than their non-Aboriginal peers, and suicide rates among some reserves in northwestern Ontario have risen dramatically in the past 20 years. A 2003 Health Canada report found that there had been a 400 per cent increase in youth suicide in Nishnawbe Aski youth, from 5 suicides in 1986 to 25 in 1995. Many First Nations youth from these communities attend secondary schools in Thunder Bay.

In Thunder Bay, between the years 2001 and 2004, there were 87 reported suicides. In March 2007, two unrelated youth suicides took place at two different Thunder Bay high schools within the same week. Seventeen high-risk youth were admitted to hospital in the aftermath of these suicides. (As well, there were nine suicides in the city in the span of a two-week period that year.) Since that time, there have been at least six youth suicides (ages 14 to 20) in Thunder Bay.

These events revealed how unprepared the community was to deal with the consequences of youth suicide. Every person who dies by suicide directly affects at least 10 family members, friends or colleagues. These suicides created a domino effect throughout the city. Local hospitals, high schools and mental health providers were not ready for the extent of the fallout.

The community had to develop a better response to youth suicides and work toward preventing further events. As a

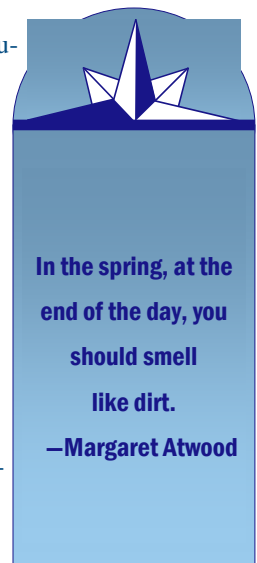
first step, Children's Centre Thunder Bay and Lakehead District School Board put out a call to action to unite concerned service providers to discuss what could be done.

The result of this call to action in April 2007 was the creation of the Thunder Bay Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force. This task force is focused on a multi-sector community plan for primary prevention and acute response to youth suicide. Its key objectives are

- to increase knowledge and awareness of issues related to youth suicide
- to work collaboratively to prevent youth suicide in the community of Thunder Bay
- to work collaboratively to respond to youth suicide in an effective and timely manner
- to mobilize the community and build capacity to deal with youth suicide and other tragic events

The task force's first goal was to develop a Youth Suicide Rapid Response Fan-Out Protocol. The protocol involves a number of service

(Continued on page 4)



In the spring, at the  
end of the day, you  
should smell  
like dirt.  
—Margaret Atwood

## Addressing Youth Suicide In Thunder Bay: An Integrated Community And School Response, cont'd

*(Continued from page 3)*

providers committing human resources and supports to school boards after a youth suicide. The protocol is started when a school principal or designate requests it. These coordinated services are time limited and are meant to enhance existing school resources. They are designed to identify high-risk youth and triage them to the appropriate service.

Twenty service providers signed the protocol's Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) at an official signing ceremony in April 2009, including Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board. These organizations are committed to sharing resources and expertise and to developing strategies to reduce youth suicide in the community. What has been unique about the task force is the role of collaboration. Community partners have been able to reach beyond their silos and come together for the benefit of the community's youth.

"It is important to continue to work in collaboration with the community and the youth that we serve to prevent the loss of further life through the tragedy of suicide," says **Rob Kruse**, superintendent of education for the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board (TBCDSB).

There are now 25 agencies represented on the task force and new ones are welcome. The task force is culturally diverse as well; for example, many local First Nations and Francophone agencies and organizations are represented.

The MOA makes sure that the partners offering and receiving services make the protocol part of their mandate. It also makes sure that staffing changes will not affect the longevity of the MOA. In fact, the participating school boards have

altered their Tragic Events Protocol documents to make the protocol part of school procedure.

In addition to the TBCDSB, these partners include, among others, the Canadian Mental Health Association - Crisis Response Service, Ontario Native Women's Association, Thunder Bay Police - Kids n' Cops, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit, Anishnawbe Mushkiki, Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boreales, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Thunder Bay District Health Unit, Thunder Bay Counselling Centre and Ka-Na-Chi-Hih Specialized Solvent Abuse Treatment Centre.

One of the task force's first activities was to get the community's input on how to better respond to and prevent youth suicide. This was done through separate consultations with youth, parents and stakeholders. From the beginning, youth engagement has been a key value of the task force. The first consultation was conducted with high school students. Since that time, presentations and community consultations have typically included a presentation by youth, making sure that the youth perspective on the problem and the solutions is included.

"As the task force moves into its next phase—education—we must continue to rely on the voices that we hear from our youth," says Kruse. "Consultation with them will be key to ensure our efforts are successful."

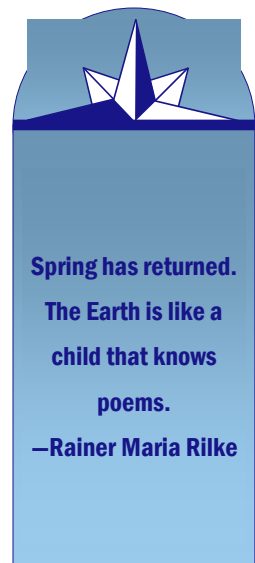
During the latter part of the project, the task force turned its attention toward prevention of youth suicide. One of

*(Continued on page 5)*

### Facts About Youth And Suicide

- Ninety per cent of suicides are thought to be completed by people who have depression or some other mental illness and/or substance abuse problem.
- Mental health problems often emerge between the ages of 16 and 24.
- Youth have the highest prevalence of mental health problems.
- Between 70 and 80 per cent of Canadian youth will consider suicide prior to graduation.
- Rates of suicide in children and youth increased significantly over the last three decades.

*From the Thunder Bay Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force Phase 3 Final Report, May 2010*



## Addressing Youth Suicide In Thunder Bay: An Integrated Community And School Response, cont'd

(Continued from page 4)

this phase's outcomes is an increased awareness of youth suicide in Thunder Bay. This formerly taboo subject is now being discussed more openly. Committee members conduct presentations and consultations throughout the community. Strong media coverage in newspapers, on radio and on local television news broadcasts has increased community awareness that youth suicide is a preventable public health issue.

The task force continues to grow. The committee consists of a large assembly of members that meet quarterly. It is led by an executive committee that meets monthly, under which are six active subcommittees. Subcommittees work on prevention strategies guided by evidence-based research, best practices and recommendations from community consultations.

The six subcommittees are

- Youth Consultation
- Clinical Guidelines
- Mental Health Campaign
- Education and Skill Building for Youth
- Education and Skill Building for Parents
- Education and Skill Building for Education Systems

Since that first call to action in 2007, the task force has taken many actions, including holding three youth consultations, a community mobilization workshop, a parents consultation, a stakeholders luncheon, two Aboriginal agency meetings, a strategic planning day, and a presentation to city council. In 2009 and 2010, it launched a mental health campaign targeting parents called "Your Teen Needs You."

One year ago, in April 2010, the task force released *Youth Voice: A Report on the Views Expressed by Youth on How Thunder Bay Can Prevent Youth Suicide*.

The *Youth Voice* report lists five key recommendations:

- Increase the number of culturally based learning-centred workshops that provide more opportunities for youth to learn about their culture and that engage youth in building their resiliency and coping skills.
- Increase accessibility to professional services at locations that are convenient to students, as well as culturally

appropriate help services that include telephone, online and written resources.

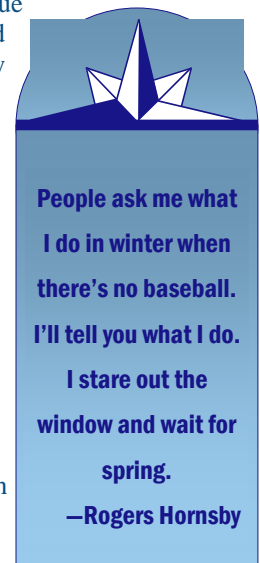
- Increase skill-building mental wellness workshops that build self-esteem and increase leadership skills to increase youth resiliency.
- Increase the number of accessible and affordable youth-friendly programs and activities.
- Increase awareness and skill building for younger youth, parents and health professionals at convenient locations to increase the coping skills and resiliency of children at an elementary level and increase supports for families.

The report emphasizes the importance of having these recommendations taken seriously by the community. Youth have identified the initiatives that they believe will work for them in creating an environment where they feel supported and feel a connection to the community. These recommendations are strengthened by the fact that they mirror the suggestions provided in 2007, and by research evidence that outlines many of the same strategies to build youth resiliency and coping skills. It concludes by stating it is now time for the community to move forward in providing the initiatives that will enhance the mental health of its youth and prevent the tragedy of youth suicide.

There are many factors that will sustain this project into the future. Community decision-makers and agencies have committed, through the MOA, to the acute response to and prevention of youth suicide. The issue of suicide prevention is multifaceted and will continue to be addressed by many strategies. Thunder Bay's unique northern location and small size lets partners work together and share resources for optimal results.

"Being part of this diverse group of organizations that are both passionate and committed to supporting youth in crisis has been among the most rewarding initiatives of my career in education," says Kruse.

Thanks to the community coming together, including those involved in education, its capacity to deal with youth suicide has improved.



## Profiles Of Our Sponsors, Part 2: Xerox Canada

**X**erox represents the world's leading document management technology and services enterprise. It provides the industry's broadest portfolio of colour and black-and-white document processing systems and related supplies, as well as document management consultant and outsourcing services.

Xerox Canada has been a long-time sponsoring partner with CASA. In this sponsor profile, the second in our series, we talk with Xerox Canada's **Randy Brydges**. He is Xerox's director of Western Canada Sales Agent Operations. Randy and his Xerox colleagues have been familiar faces at many of CASA's annual conferences.

*How long has Xerox been a sponsoring partner with CASA?*

**Randy:** We have been a sponsoring partner since 2002.

*How would you describe your role as a sponsor? What services or products do you offer to the organization through this sponsoring relationship?*

**Randy:** Our role as a sponsor is to recognize excellence among members of the superintendancy. We are able to accomplish this through the EXL Award. This award is jointly presented by Xerox Canada Ltd. and the Canadian Association of School Administrators.

*Why does Xerox like this partnership?*

**Randy:** This partnership has allowed us to collectively work with CASA and its provincial affiliate organizations. It has provided us with a better understanding of the critical leadership role of a superintendent in all of its dimensions.

*What does Xerox see as the benefits it gets from developing and maintaining this relationship with CASA over the years?*

**Randy:** We have been able to acknowledge 48 individuals from 11 affiliate organizations whose excellence in leadership has been recognized since 2002. Looking forward, there are other opportunities that this partnership affords, other opportunities such as sharing knowledge, the education forum at our



**Randy Brydges** congratulating **Joanne Messner** on winning the EXL Award at the Calgary conference in 2009.

research facility, assisting in developing a five-year strategic plan, additional sponsorship, and so on.

*Finally, Randy, you personally have attended many of the CASA annual conferences. Why is attending in person important to you?*

**Randy:** I have a passion for education. Xerox has a passion for education. I gain knowledge at each annual conference. We believe we have a responsibility to the community and organizations we serve, beyond the economic gain. The EXL Award is giving back to the communities in which we live and work.

*Thank you, Randy, and we hope to see you in Niagara Falls this summer.*



From left to right: **Frank Kelly**, **Randy Brydges** and Randy's Xerox colleague **Linda Lucas** congratulate **John Mackle** on his EXL Award in Quebec City in 2010.



## CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd



**Michael Chechile**  
Quebec

Michael is the director of Educational Services for the Lester B. Pearson School Board in Quebec. He began his teaching career at a juvenile detention centre. He has also served as an educational consultant and as a school principal. Michael earned a BEd from McGill and an MEd from Concordia. He lectures at Concordia on educational technology.

He has been working on the development of school board policy and the instructional design for digital citizenship materials. He continues to implement strategies in the delivery of French for students, literacy and numeracy, third language instruction, innovations in classroom technology and creation of work-oriented pathway programs.

Michael and his wife Della have two teenage boys. He enjoys travelling and spending time with his family.



**Laura Elliott**  
Ontario

Laura has been the executive superintendent (Program Services) for the Thames Valley District School Board since 2007. She started her career with the Durham District School Board as a secondary teacher and department head, vice principal and education officer; she was appointed superintendent in 1996. As well, Laura worked in adult education with DND in Lahr, Germany, the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ontario Ministry of Education in Student Success. She completed her BSc at Western, BEd and MEd at the U of T, and MBA at Athabasca University.

She has been actively involved in OPSOA for the past five years and serves as a regional director on the CASA board.

Laura enjoys travelling, running, golfing and charity fundraising. She and her husband Leo live in London.



**Jamie McNamara**  
Alberta

Jamie has been the superintendent with St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Schools since 2005. Before that, he was a division principal, principal, vice principal and teacher with Red Deer Catholic, and a teacher with Fort McMurray Catholic. He earned his BEd and graduate diploma at the University of Alberta, and his MSc at the University of Oregon.

He has received the Leduc-Nisku EDA Ambassador Award, the Notre Dame High School Spirit Award and the ATA Council of School Administration Distinguished Leadership Award, as well as two awards for his work as a hockey referee.

Jamie enjoys golfing, hiking and cross-country skiing, and is active in St. Michael's Parish and Rotary. He and his wife Sharon have four grown children and four grandchildren, with one on the way in April.

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## Our Mission

CASA exists to promote and enhance effective administration and leadership in the provision of quality in education in Canada.



## Our Beliefs

- School system administration is a noble profession.
- Effective leadership and administration of school systems are essential.
- Individually and collectively, school system administrators provide leadership for quality in education.
- Communication and cooperation with other stakeholder groups in education are vital.
- Individually and collectively, school system administrators can assist one another.

## Our Goals

- To provide a national voice on education matters.
- To promote and provide opportunity for professional development of the membership.
- To promote communication and liaison with national and international organizations having an interest in education.
- To provide a variety of services to the membership.
- To recognize outstanding contributions to education in Canada.

## Update Bulletin On Your CASA Executive Leadership: Roger Nippard To Serve As 2012–2013 President

With the recent passing of **Chris Gonnet**, who was CASA's president-elect and was to be the 2012–2014 president, there are several changes to announce about the organization's executive leadership.

Current CASA president **Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells** will continue to serve as president through until July 2012. The CASA executive has added a member of the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) to serve as 2011–2012 president-elect and then as 2012–2014 president: **Roger Nippard**.

Roger is the superintendent of the Northern Lights School Division, which serves public school students in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Lac La Biche region of northeastern Alberta. Roger is also the current first vice president of CASS and will serve as that organization's next president. Roger was featured in *Faces in the Crowd* in *Leaders & Learners* Volume 4, Issue 24. A full Q&A profile of Roger will appear in the newsletter once he assumes the role of CASA president in 2012.

The 2011–2012 executive and regional affiliates will be posted this summer on CASA's website at [www.casa-acas.ca](http://www.casa-acas.ca). Contact information will be published in *Leaders & Learners* later this fall.

Your current CASA executive is executive director **Frank Kelly**, professional development/communications director **Ed Wittchen**, western regional director **Barry Wowk**, Ontario (OPSOA) regional director **Laura Elliott**, Ontario (OCSOA) regional director **Cathy Horgan** and Quebec regional director **Robert Mills**. The Atlantic regional director position is vacant at this time.

Your current regional affiliates are **Guy J. Le Blanc** (Association of Nova Scotia Educational Administrators), **Kath Rhyason** (CASS), **Ron Silverstone** (Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec), **Eldred Barnes** (Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Directors of Education), **Frank Kelly** (Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association), **Theresa Harris** (Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association) and **Metro Huculak** (NWT Superintendents Association).