

# Leaders & Learners



**CASSA-ACGCS**  
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

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**10 YEARS OF**  
**LEADERS &**  
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## Message from the President: CASSA Offers Much To Unite Us

WELCOME TO THE final newsletter of the year! Since assuming my role as president in July, I have been fortunate enough to meet many members and work more closely with **Ken Bain**, our executive director. As we move into 2015, I want to reflect on the direction in which our organization is heading.

As a national organization, CASSA is in a unique position to be the voice of school system administrators. Our membership structure brings together provincial and territorial affiliates as well as individuals who represent Canadian educational leaders. CASSA has grown considerably over the last three or four years as supervisory associations across the country recognize the power of working together as educators.

Despite our differences in organizational structures, curricula and service delivery models, there is much that unites us. We are proud of the achievements in our respective boards and districts. Canada is also recognized as a nation that not only provides quality education to students but reflects the Canadian values of diversity, equity and inclusiveness.



Cindy Finn  
President

I encourage you to take advantage of our services. Our website is updated regularly with information about current events. Our publications offer glimpses into innovative projects taking place in schools across Canada. Our EXL award celebrates excellence in educational leadership.

CASSA's conference, held each July in a different location, offers opportunities to network and explore a new part of Canada. If you are not familiar with CASSA, visit our website or explore back issues of our publications. Here are five reasons to get involved:

1. Become a better educational leader.
2. Improve student outcomes.
3. Network with colleagues.
4. Contribute to the voice of senior educational leadership in Canada.
5. Understand issues affecting education in Canada today.

One of the best ways you can learn more about CASSA is to take part in our annual conference, to see for yourself the benefits of membership. All are welcome to join us next July in Montreal. Je vous souhaite la bienvenue à Montreal!

## 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: Building Up S.T.E.A.M. at the 2015 Montreal Conference

I HOPE THE first term of the school year has been a success for you and that you are all looking forward to a much-needed change of pace over the holiday season!

The CASSA board is a dedicated group of your colleagues who meet each month by teleconference to share provincial and territorial updates about the issues facing system leaders across the country. The board also makes sure that the organization operates effectively and efficiently through its overseeing of CASSA's finances.

I am pleased to affirm that CASSA is in a very strong and sound financial position. We are meeting again in January for a face-to-face planning meeting and I look forward to reporting to you on the outcome of our discussions.

Plans are beginning to take shape for our annual conference. I hope you are all aware of our theme

of S.T.E.A.M. as we explore how systems across Canada are integrating the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, arts and math.

S.T.E.M. has been around for a while, but more recently educators have come to know and understand that the arts should be included in this integrated approach. Creativity and innovation are important skills for now and for the future.

As I checked resources on the web, I found two sites (albeit from the United States) that will be of interest to those of you looking to learn more about S.T.E.A.M. You can find these sites at [steam-notstem.com](http://steam-notstem.com) and [map.stemtosteam.org](http://map.stemtosteam.org).

So...plan to attend the CASSA 2015 conference at Le Westin



Ken Bain  
Executive Director

Montreal from July 2 to 4. The conference coincides with the world famous Montreal Jazz Festival and the hotel, in Old Montreal, is just a short walk away. Please keep checking the CASSA website at [cassa-acgcs.ca](http://cassa-acgcs.ca) throughout the new year. We will be offering early bird and reduced conference rates for

CASSA members! You'll also find updates on keynote speakers and session leaders in the coming months.

Speaking of the online world, you can now follow CASSA on Twitter. We are @CASSAACGCS. We encourage you to share thoughts on the upcoming conference by using the hashtag #CASSA2015.

On behalf of the CASSA board of directors, I want to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

## Meeting CASSA's New President: A Q&A With Cindy Finn

*Why did you decide to get into the field of education? What sparked your interest and why?*

From a relatively young age, I knew that I somehow wanted to have a career that combined two of my passions: helping children and youth, particularly those with challenges, to actualize their personal goals and promoting learning and education as the means to a better life. I trained and worked as an educational psychologist in schools before moving into educational administration.

By becoming a psychologist, I committed to serving as an agent of change, and by specializing in educational psychology, I was able to direct my energies to assist teachers and support students in the learning process. I love working in a field where you can directly shape the life of a student or collaborate with teachers and parents to make a student's school experience the best it can be.

*How has education changed the most since you first entered the field?*

The biggest change I have seen over my 20 years in education is the increased attention being paid to social-emotional learning in schools. When I first entered the field, we were very focused on instructional techniques and pedagogical tools to increase academic achievement but we paid less attention to the emotional state of learners. We now talk much more about helping our students develop as citizens in an

ever-changing world and equipping them with tools that will not only help them in learning situations but will also serve them well in society. We now know so much more about the importance of the student-teacher relationship and peer-to-peer interactions in the teaching and learning process. We talk much more about ways to engage our students, both socially and intellectually. Unfortunately, some of this increased attention has been in response to the adverse effects of bullying and trauma on developing minds, and we are responding to that challenge more now as well.

*What has remained essentially the same?*

Education is all about relationships. Even with the advent of technology and distance learning, educators themselves remain the biggest resource and asset in education. For a long time now, studies have shown that quality teaching and effective leadership are essential ingredients for student success. This is not new, but what has changed is that the context surrounding teaching has changed. Pressures and expectations have increased, and so teachers are asked to do more than ever before. New technologies and instructional methods mean that classrooms are increasingly centred around collaboration, communication and creative thinking, but that calls for even more human contact to

negotiate these challenges. My colleagues and I are always discussing ways to better support teachers, as their work is paramount. Building teams to support teachers, encouraging professional development and engaging with families are all ways we can better support teachers. As system leaders, we need to find effective and efficient ways to support the development of positive teacher-student relationships.

*What do you think are CASSA's most notable achievements in recent years?*

CASSA has undergone some very positive changes in the last few years, and it is exciting to be a part of this momentum. Our new name, logo and website are all signs of growth. Membership is on the rise, and CASSA increasingly reflects the rich and diverse perspectives of system leaders who work in school boards/districts all across Canada. We have also strengthened our partnerships with other organizations. That positions us well to be recognized as the voice of senior educational administrators and to help shape the future of education in Canada.

*What sort of challenges has CASSA faced lately, and how is it meeting them?*

Canada is fortunate to be a leader in education, some of which is demonstrated in international studies comparing different systems of education. Despite provincial differences, there are many

## Meeting CASSA's New President: A Q&A With Cindy Finn, continued

commonalities that unite us as Canadian educators. The recent economic realities of provincial governments and declining student populations faced by many school districts mean that our members must address mounting challenges and pressures to provide more services with less resources. CASSA is responding to the needs of its members by offering more value-added services and providing forums for exchange and problem solving. Together we are better.

*What do you feel are some of your own personal achievements in the field of education?*

In my work as director of Student Services in a large English-speaking school board with a mix of urban, suburban and rural schools, I oversee a fantastic team of non-teaching professionals who provide prevention/promotion services to students from K–11 as well as support students with diverse learning needs. There are a wide array of professionals in Student Services, ranging from psychologists and speech and language therapists to guidance counsellors and community/spiritual care animators. These professionals work in multidisciplinary teams, supporting teachers, assisting paraprofessionals and serving students. Along with the in-school administrators, they take the lead in building capacity in our schools to better support our students. Our school board has a

high rate of student graduation and is renowned for its innovative programming to support students with special needs. I am proud to work alongside these professionals, and support them as they try out new approaches or rededicate themselves to a difficult situation.

*Outside of your work in education, what are some of your interests or hobbies?*

When not working, I like to travel and try new things. Volunteering is also an important aspect in my life. I am involved with two local non-profit organizations, one that supports young adults with developmental disabilities in learning work and socialization skills, and one that provides wellness services to individuals coping with cancer. Through these organizations, I have met many people who serve as an inspiration and reminder that amid the challenges of life, there is much hope and strength. I also enjoy travel and try to take a few trips each year that bring me to the seaside to rest, relax and recharge.

*What is the greatest lesson you have learned as a teacher or as an educational administrator?*

Most of my career has been spent helping students who struggle in school to find their own pathway to success. The biggest lesson I have learned is the power that one significant relationship with an adult can play in changing the life of a youngster. Working in schools and

working at the school board office, I have seen students' lives turn around when an educator—whether it is a teacher, a principal, a paraprofessional or a coach—takes an interest in helping a student face a challenge and acts as a guide or support. When that relationship is secure, students are connected and supported, they are engaged and motivated to achieve. Sometimes we only discover years later the positive impact we have had on students, but it has been very powerful to witness the role that relationships play in the learning and growth process.

*How many years have you been involved with CASSA and its regional affiliate AAESQ? How did you first become involved with CASSA and what made you want to work with the organization at the executive level?*

My first experience with CASSA was in 2009 when I presented at the annual conference in Calgary. Soon thereafter, I became involved with the board of directors, representing my provincial affiliate AAESQ at the table. Meeting passionate educators from all over Canada was powerful, and I realized that CASSA offers wonderful opportunities for professional growth and networking. Being an English-speaking Quebecer working in an English-language school board, it is important to remain connected to what is happening in the rest of Canada as well as with our French-speaking colleagues. Meeting colleagues

## Meeting CASSA's New President: A Q&A With Cindy Finn, continued

through CASSA allows for more exchange with colleagues from all over the country.

*What are you most looking forward to as both CASSA president and hometown host at next year's conference in Montreal?*

This is an exciting time for CASSA. We are growing; we have seen new affiliates join or reactivate their membership. Our goal is to be a strong pan-Canadian voice for school system leaders; as educators from around the country join us, we move

closer to achieving this objective. We have also established a strategic plan and renewed our purpose and mission statements so that educational leaders better understand the objectives of our association. We have increased our partnerships with other educational organizations and are working with industry sponsors who support our professional development activities.

This year's conference theme is so relevant for school boards/districts today. Finding ways to integrate

science, technology and the arts throughout the curriculum is critical for helping students achieve success in the modern era. We hope everyone can join us in Montreal next July to learn more about S.T.E.A.M. initiatives taking place in schools across Canada. The conference promises to be our biggest and best ever!

*Thank you, Cindy, and good luck in your 2014–16 term as president and as 2015 conference host in Montreal.*

## Sponsoring Partner Profile: Discovery Education Canada

*Discovery Education Canada transforms classrooms, empowers teachers and captivates students by leading the way in providing high-quality and dynamic digital content to school districts of all sizes. With award-winning digital content, interactive lessons, real-time assessment, virtual experiences with some of Discovery's greatest talent, classroom contests and challenges, professional development and more, Discovery is leading the way in transforming classrooms and inspiring learning. It offers a breadth and depth of digital media content that is immersive and engaging, and brings the world into the classroom to give every student a chance to experience fascinating people, places and events. Discovery Education Canada has supported CASSA's conference activities for several years now. In our continuing series of profiles on sponsoring partners, we present a question-and-answer interview with Discovery's Canadian Community Manager **Dean Shareski**. Readers who were at this year's conference in Calgary may recall Dean's closing keynote address.*

*It's important that our readers get to know our CASSA conference sponsors. Please tell our readers about your company.*

As the leading provider of digital textbooks, curriculum-based digital content, and professional development, Discovery Education is transforming teaching and learning worldwide. Serving over 3.5 million educators and 35 million students, Discovery Education's award-winning services are available in classrooms across North America and in 50 countries around the globe.

I am especially proud of the fact that Discovery Education pioneered the development and implementation of digital textbooks. Designed to replace traditional, hardcopy textbooks as the primary resource for classroom instruction, Discover Education's engaging digital textbooks, or Techbooks, are among the first to be used broadly across Canada and the United States.

*Please tell our readers a little bit about yourself.*

## Sponsoring Partner Profile: Discovery Education Canada, continued

I've been with Discovery Education for three years as their Canadian Community Manager. It's a great role, as I work to support the Discovery Educator Network community both in Canada and around the globe. Prior to joining Discovery Education, I spent over 25 years in education as a teacher and district coordinator, and even today I continue to teach at the post-secondary level.

My focus has always been on making learning meaningful, personal and enjoyable. I work hard to realize my belief that learning should be a joyful experience, and I believe that technology is a great tool and platform to realize these ideals for all learners. I've been privileged to work with innovators and passionate learners throughout my career and have continued that pattern of association through my work with Discovery Education and its partner school systems around Canada and the world.

Finally, I'm blessed with a wonderful wife who is also an educator, four children and a son-in-law. All are great people that I couldn't be more proud of. When I'm not travelling, spending time with family and friends, you might find me on a golf course.

*How long has your company been a CASSA sponsor?*

I am pleased to report that this is the third year of Discovery Education's CASSA sponsorship.

*Why is it important to you to develop a sponsorship relationship with CASSA? What makes your company a good match with an organization like CASSA?*

I would say the primary reason Discovery Education is proud to sponsor CASSA is because our organizations share a joint mission to promote and support quality education for the success of all students. I believe that by working with such an important group of leaders with a tremendous impact on learning throughout Canada, we



Dean Shareski

can find new and innovative ways for all of us to reach our common goals.

*Were you able to attend the 2014 CASSA conference in Calgary, Alberta? If so, what were your impressions of the event and of CASSA members? What were the highlights of the experience for you? What would you tell other sponsors who are considering attending a CASSA conference?*

I did and in fact was privileged to provide the closing keynote as well as co-present another session with one of our partners. What impressed me was the quality of conversations. CASSA represents some of the most forward-thinking educators we interact with. Their very presence at this conference demonstrates their

commitment to transforming learning and understanding the complexities and challenges that come along with this charge.

*Any plans to attend the 2015 conference in Montreal? What are you most looking forward to?*

I am. Always looking forward to renewing old friendships but also the opportunity to connecting with new folks as well. It also doesn't hurt that Montreal is an amazing city.

*Would you like to add anything about your company and this partnership that may be of interest to our readers?*

Only that Discovery Education is dedicated to supporting Canadian educators in accelerating student achievement, by bringing the world of Discovery into classrooms and igniting students' natural curiosity. I encourage CASSA members to visit our website at [www.discoveryeducation.ca](http://www.discoveryeducation.ca) to learn more.

*Thank you, Dean, for sharing this information about Discovery Education with our members.*

## Sponsoring Partner Profile: EF Educational Tours

*In the second of this issue's sponsor profiles, Leaders & Learners is pleased to share the story of EF Educational Tours. EF truly stepped up to the challenge of showing their support for CASSA by offering an incredible door prize at the 2014 conference in Calgary. It was all the more incredible considering this was only EF's second year working with CASSA. As well, David Mann, the company's vice president of Educational Partnerships, was actively interacting and engaging with CASSA members at the Calgary conference.*

EF EDUCATIONAL TOURS is the world leader in international education. Our tours foster student and teacher engagement, allowing them to discover the world and encounter new cultures that help bring classroom learning to life.

The year 2015 marks our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. What began in 1965 as a window into new cultures and languages for small groups of student travellers led by our founder **Bertil Hult** has since blossomed into a worldwide organization. With over 500 schools and offices in more than 52 countries, our global network of support staff—including professional tour directors and around-the-clock emergency services—captures our unparalleled commitment to ensuring both a safe and authentic learning experience.

For 50 years, we've helped teachers and students discover the world through culturally immersive educational travel. With a focus on critical thinking, problem solving and global awareness, EF's blended learning model ensures every EF tour is rich with educational experiences that bring classroom learning to life. Our educational philosophy is simple: the best way to help students gain new perspectives and build skills for the future is through experiential learning. As a result, we've built a wide range of international and North American experiential tours for Canadian students. This wide range encompasses subject areas to complement any curriculum including, but not limited to, Canada's History, Service Learning, Language Immersion, and Global Student Leaders Summits.

At EF, our relationship with CASSA began in 2013 when we attended the annual conference in St. John's, Newfoundland. Pursuing a relationship with CASSA stemmed from our interest in gaining greater insight into education in Canada—the issues of the day, the policies, reforms, the challenges and success stories that influence the Canadian educational system. Partnering with CASSA provides us with the unique opportunity to gain these important insights on a personal level while engaging with superintendents, administrators and school officials. It's about building bridges and making personal connections that matter—involvement with CASSA certainly helps to facilitate that, and we always look forward to meeting new members. As it stands, CASSA's various mandates—to provide professional development for its members, to liaise with national and international groups interested in the



Superintendents and directors of education from across Canada on the D-Day 70th Anniversary Tour.



## Sponsoring Partner Profile: EF Educational Tours, continued

betterment of education, and to recognize outstanding educators within Canada—are all very much in line with our philosophy. It just makes sense that we work toward these goals together.

In 2014, our vice president of Educational Partnerships, **David Mann**, attended the CASSA conference in Alberta and was struck by how many passionate and engaged members he had the pleasure of meeting and chatting with. Interacting with everyone left us inspired, and we realized quite soon that everyone was working toward the same goals. Nothing beats actual face-to-face time, and we enjoyed every moment of it.

In Alberta, we wanted to show strong support for CASSA and how we might work together in the future with its members. To demonstrate the life-changing moments a student will experience on a Canada's History tour as they stand in the places where our country's history was shaped, we gave away a door prize that would represent just this.

One lucky winner won a six-day trip to the Netherlands to experience EF's professional development Victory in Europe educational tour. In May 2015, CASSA winner Kevin Andrea will join other superintendents and directors from across our nation as they witness hundreds of Canadian students take part in commemorative events celebrating the achievements of great people who helped shape our history. In 2017, we are also looking forward to leading groups of students back to France to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

As we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015, EF will be interested in learning what CASSA has planned—we're sure it will benefit education in Canada and we applaud them for that.

For more on how your district can be engaged through global education, please visit us at [eftours.ca](http://eftours.ca) or email EF Educational Tours' David Mann, vice president of Educational Partnerships, at [david.mann@EF.com](mailto:david.mann@EF.com).

## CONTACT CASSA

1123 Glenashton Drive  
Oakville, ON  
L6H 5M1  
Canada

T: (905) 845-2345  
F: (905) 845-2044

[ken\\_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca](mailto:ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca)

[www.cassa-acgcs.ca](http://www.cassa-acgcs.ca)

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Tara Lee Wittchen

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**Educational Tours**