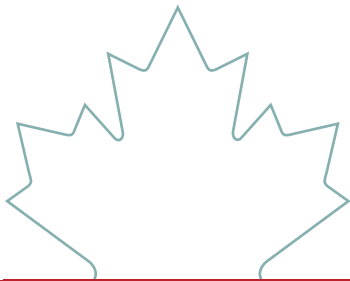


## Greetings from the President



# A

s we continue to evolve and better the work to serve students, there has been significant discussion lately amongst my colleagues and other educational leaders across the country about ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot system, and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into the educational process. In a New York Times article published on December 10, 2022, by reporter Cade Metz, Data Scientist Jeremy Howard relates, “these systems cannot exactly chat like a human, but they often seem to.” He further goes on to say, “they can also retrieve and repackage information with a speed that humans never could, they can be thought of as digital assistants like Siri, only better at understanding what you are looking for and giving it to you.” However, AI like ChatGPT, is only a sum of its inputs and can’t offer consistent accuracy or verify information. As Jonathan May, Research Associate Professor of Computer Science at the University of Southern California points out, “...ChatGPT doesn’t try to write sentences that are true. But it does try to write sentences that are plausible.”<sup>1</sup>

The academic world has mixed reactions to the software; some see potential for an excellent teaching aid and others worry that students will abuse it to avoid work. I believe these concerns can be addressed through lesson design with a focus on competency development, critical and creative thinking, and the use of other AI tools. Work can be done during class time under teacher observation to evaluate the composition skills of students. Also, we already have software available to detect whether a piece of work has been written by a chatbot such as ChatGPT. One such product, ChatZero had over 30,000 users in its first week of release. Humans adapt quickly.

Understanding how to work with new AI programs will likely require professional development and careful planning of learning episodes and desired learning outcomes. We know that educators are resilient through technological change. Whether it’s the advent of the scientific calculator in the 1970s, concerns of plagiarizing from



**Kevin Kaardal**  
CASSA/ACGCS President

vast online resources in the early 2000s, or fears of online academies competing with brick-and-mortar schools, educational leaders respond to the so-called threats to public education and adapt.

At the Thought Exchange Leadership Summit, 35 superintendents considered the question, “What is the Impact of AI and ChatGPT in Education?” One concern raised was the potential for data to be collected, stored, and used in ways that may not be in the best interest of students and their families. This is an issue that must be addressed through the development of guidelines and policies that ensure the protection of student privacy. Other issues were also identified, and I am thankful to the Thought Exchange team for sharing the summaries for those of us unable to attend the summit. The point is, we need to be thoughtful in our approach to new tools, especially in the field of AI.

Chatbots and other forms of AI are powerful tools, but they are not perfect ones. As education system leaders we are responsible for understanding the new information and learning tools and ensuring they can be utilized in powerful ways to support the development of competencies in students. With these competencies, our students will have the capacity to thrive in a complex global world. I believe we can collectively find ways to support each other through this new development.

### Reference:

1. May, Jonathan. “ChatGPT is great – you’re just using it wrong.” *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/chatgpt-is-great-youre-just-using-it-wrong-198848>.



## Inside this Issue

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

# Greetings from the Executive Director

**E**ach year, the The Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) board of directors convenes in Toronto to review its successes and to engage in strategic planning. After two years of virtual meetings, we were able to meet in person in Toronto during the last weekend in January. Much of the focus of our work involved a review of the CASSA Beliefs:

- The role of school system administrators is essential in ensuring success for each student;
- CASSA is a learning organization that promotes individual and collective learning for its members;
- CASSA has a responsibility to initiate and participate in dialogue on educational matters of national significance; and
- It is essential to communicate and collaborate with educational and community partners to ensure excellence and equity in publicly funded education across Canada.

Time was spent deciding whether we should be signalling beliefs, or values

or commitments... more to come next time once the work is complete.

The board received two presentations, one from Jim Costello who serves as the Oversight Committee Chair of the Microsoft Education Voucher Program. Approximately \$165 million is being made available to K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions in the form of vouchers to support students across Canada with access to new computer hardware, software, and related training. Visit the settlement website at: <https://www.ThatSuiteMoney.ca/> for more info.

The second presentation was from Dr. Cathy Martin, Senior Director of Professional Development and Certification, First Nations Education Administrators Association (FNEAA). Dr. Martin presented an overview of a Canadian Historical Framework: Stages in the Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples. Dr. Martin also spoke of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the September 2017 United Nations statement from Prime Minister Trudeau. She also shared the FNEAA origin, purpose, vision, value statements and a strategic plan overview. In September 2021, there were 84 regular



**Ken Bain**

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

and 21 corporate members of FNEAA. The association has an administrative team and a board of directors from several First Nations committed to the association.

Dr. Martin affirmed that at this time of reconciliation, working together is mandatory and not just desirable.

**Ken Bain**

Executive Director of CASSA/ACGCS

**SAVE THE DATE:**

**The CASSA 2023 Conference**

Theme: *Leadership: Coast to Coast to Coast*  
July 5-7, 2023

Victoria, British Columbia

Check the CASSA Conference Website for hotel, travel, and program updates (<http://conference.cassa-acgcs.ca>).

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# The School Mental Health Leadership Network:

## A Pan-Canadian Approach to Supporting Well-Being in School Communities

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

**F**or more than half a decade, the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) has prioritized examining the ways that school system administrators

can support school mental health. Particular attention has been paid to how system leaders can best collaborate with colleagues in education and health to determine well-being and mental health strategies for school communities across Canada.

One of the earliest milestones in this work was the publication in 2017 of a discussion paper on *System Leadership*

*in School Mental Health in Canada.*<sup>1</sup> The paper, which was co-authored by former CASSA president Dr. Cindy Finn (Director General, Lester B. Pearson School Board), Dr. Bruce Ferguson (Hospital for Sick Children), and Dr. Kathy Short (School Mental Health ASSIST), highlighted the need for concerted and coordinated support for system leadership in school mental





# Want to learn more about upcoming network meetings?

Have a topic or theme to suggest? Reach out!

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lead project facilitator,  
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health. It also extended an invitation to CASSA members to contribute ideas about how to develop a collaborative capacity-building plan.

That summer, the theme at CASSA's annual conference was *Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities, Healthy Future*. In addition to 30 breakout sessions focusing on practices to support healthy students, schools, and communities, the conference featured a pan-Canadian panel discussion on student mental health and well-being. Discussion paper co-author Dr. Short delivered the conference's closing keynote address, and later presented again at the CASSA board of director's winter planning session.

Dr. Short also took part in an extensive interview with *Leaders & Learners* that covered aspects of her conference address, including ways that system leaders can support educators as they work toward enhancing student well-being at school. The interview ran in two parts, in the February 2018 and April 2018 issues of the newsletter. In it, she cautioned that mental health programming is not neutral and offered advice on practices to avoid and evidence-based practices for leaders to support.

At that time there were no province-wide school board-based initiatives promoting student mental health and well-being, apart from in Ontario, though Dr. Short made note

of several regional approaches and national initiatives such as the Positive Mental Health Toolkit from the Joint Consortium for School Health. She advised system leaders who were interested in developing or supporting something like the School Mental Health ASSIST model in their own jurisdictions to think big but start small and to lead from the middle. SMHA, for example, started with just 15 Ontario school districts before scaling up to another cohort of 15.

In 2020, Dr. Short once again collaborated closely with CASSA as well as leadership from the Canadian School Board Association (CSBA) to start work on a national network of school system administrators and governors focused on supporting the mental health and well-being of students in publicly funded K–12 districts across the country. Funding was secured from the McConnell Family Foundation, a private Canadian foundation that contributes to diverse and innovative approaches to address issues like community resilience and reconciliation.

CASSA's executive director Ken Bain reached out to Dr. Finn and CSBA's executive director Nancy Pynch-Worthylake asked Edmonton Public Schools trustee Nathan Ip to join them on a steering committee. This steering committee sought out topic and theme suggestions from within their organizations, which

formed the basis of the first series of network meetings. The steering committee also secured thought leaders to present at the meetings.

Three network meetings were held online in 2021 and another three were held in 2022. Three more are planned for 2023. They typically lasted 90 minutes and consisted of the thought leader's presentation on the chosen topic or theme, an open question and answer session, and breakout sessions in smaller groups of CASSA and CSBA administrators and governors representing various geographic regions of Canada (and facilitated by steering committee members). Notes taken during these breakout sessions were later shared with other network members.

The thought leaders chosen for these meetings have years of experience and expertise in research and practice in the field of child and adolescent mental health. In 2021 and 2022, those thought leaders included Dr. Jean Clinton (McMaster University), Dr. Deinera Exner-Cortens (University of Calgary), Dr. Brenda Restoule (First Peoples Wellness Circle), Dr. Kathy Georgiades (Offord Centre for Child Studies), Dr. Michael Ungar (Dalhousie University), and Dr. John LeBlanc (IWK Health Centre/Dalhousie University). In February 2023, a network meeting was led by Dr. Christopher Mushquash (Lakehead University) and Dr. Elaine Toombs (Lakehead University).

Additional network meetings are scheduled for May 5 and November 3, 2023, and topics will be selected by network meetings through surveys that will be administered later this year. ○

## Reference:

1. Short, Kathy, Cindy Finn, and H. Bruce Ferguson. "System Leadership in School Mental Health in Canada." CASSA Discussion Paper, 2017. <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/cms/lib/ON01929128/Centricity/Domain/30/CASSA-Discussion-Paper-System-Ldrship-in-School-MH.pdf>.

# School Mental Health Leadership Network Thought Leaders

*\*Note: Individual preferred spelling for describing First Nations community has been used here. Dr. Restoule describes Dokis First Nation as Ojibwa and Dr. Mushquash describes himself as Ojibway. Both are correct spellings and usages.*

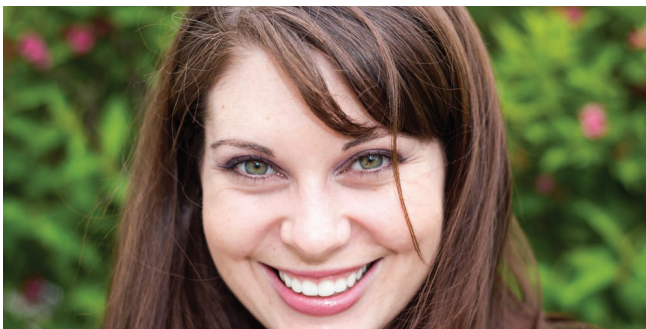
## 2021–2022 THOUGHT LEADERS



**Dr. Jean Clinton**

McMaster University

Dr. Clinton is a clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences at the Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine and a specialist in child psychiatry. She is an expert in the development of young minds and the role relationships and connectedness play, and an internationally recognized advocate for children's issues. She champions the development of a national, comprehensive child well-being strategy, including a system of early learning and childcare for all young children and their families. Dr. Clinton is equally committed to making sure that the voices of children and youth are heard and respected.



**Dr. Deiner Exner-Cortens**

University of Calgary

Dr. Exner-Cortens is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Social Work, and is jointly appointed to the Department of Psychiatry, Cumming School of Medicine. She is also a full member of the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute and the O'Brien Institute for Public Health, and an associate

member of the Matheson Centre for Mental Health Research and Education. Her research focuses on evaluating healthy relationships and mental health promotion activities in school and community settings, developing and evaluating implementation support tools for school-based mental health and healthy relationships service delivery, and prevention of adolescent dating violence.



**Dr. Brenda Restoule**

First Peoples Wellness Circle

Dr. Restoule is a registered clinical psychologist from Dokis First Nation (Ojibwa) in Ontario. Her practice focuses on providing direct clinical services and consultation to First Nations people and communities in Anishinabek territory. She is a consultant to government on Indigenous mental health, addictions, and mental wellness with the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, the Assembly of First Nations, and First Nation and Inuit Health Branch on developing and implementing the First Nation Mental Wellness Continuum Framework. Dr. Restoule has particular interest in cultural safety, Indigenous community development and capacity building, and reducing suicide rates in First Nations communities using Indigenous knowledge and practices.



## 2023 THOUGHT LEADERS (TO DATE)



### **Dr. Kathy Georgiades**

Offord Centre for Child Studies

Dr. Georgiades is an associate professor in psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences, and an associate member in clinical epidemiology and biostatistics. Her program of research seeks to quantify and reduce inequities in mental health and academic achievement among vulnerable populations, particularly immigrant and refugee children and adolescents. She holds a New Investigator Award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the David R. (Dan) Offord Chair in Child Studies.



### **Dr. Michael Ungar**

Dalhousie University

Dr. Ungar is the founder and director of the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University, where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Child, Family and Community Resilience. He provides regular consultation to international NGOs, government agencies in more than a dozen countries, and educational institutions. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, the past recipient of the National Distinguished Service Award from the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and he has served on many boards. In 2022, Dr. Ungar was ranked the number one social work scholar in the world based on his ground-breaking work as a family therapist and resilience researcher.

### **Dr. John LeBlanc**

IWK Health Centre/Dalhousie University

Dr. LeBlanc is a pediatrician and epidemiologist at the IWK Health Centre and an associate professor of pediatrics at Dalhousie University. He has retired from clinical work but continues to engage in research and policy about mental health in children and youth. His work includes a social skills intervention pilot project called Circles of Support, a project identifying what components make school-based violence prevention programs successful, a collaborative project researching resilience in disadvantaged adolescents. Dr. LeBlanc is also involved in developing and testing school-based methods of mental health screening.



### **Dr. Christopher Mushquash**

Lakehead University

Dr. Mushquash is a registered clinical psychologist providing assessment, intervention, and consultation services for First Nations children, adolescents, and adults at Dilico Anishinabek Family Care. He is a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Mental Health and Addiction, and a professor with the Department of Psychology at Lakehead University and with the Human Services Unit at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University. He is also vice president research at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and director of the Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research at Lakehead University. Dr. Mushquash is Ojibway and a member of Pays Plat First Nation in Ontario.



### **Dr. Elaine Toombs**

Lakehead University

Dr. Toombs is a registered clinical psychologist at Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, where she provides assessment, intervention, and consultation services for First Nations children, adolescents, and adults. She is also a Canadian Institutes of Health Research Banting postdoctoral fellow and an adjunct professor in the Department of Psychology at Lakehead University. Her research primarily focuses on First Nations mental health using community-based methods. As a co-investigator of a Canadian Institutes of Health Research project grant, Dr. Toombs also examines how adverse childhood experiences may affect psychological and physical health outcomes with First Nations people in residential treatment.



### **Dr. Kathy Short**

Dr. Short is a clinical child psychologist with research and practice interests in school mental health promotion, knowledge mobilization, and implementation science. She is the executive director for School Mental Health Ontario, a provincial implementation team supporting the uptake and sustainability of evidence-based mental health promotion and prevention programming in schools. She has served on several provincial advisory groups and co-chairs the School Mental Health International Leadership Exchange (SMHILE), a network of global leaders focused on key themes in mental health promotion. She helps to lead the School Mental Health Leadership Network.



# CASSA Awards: Recognizing Outstanding Leadership

2023  
update

**F**or over two decades, the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) has presented the EXL Award to recognize the extraordinary efforts of Canadian school system leaders. The award is presented at each of CASSA's national conferences (barring extraordinary circumstances).

Since its inception in 2002, the EXL Award has been supported by Xerox Canada. CASSA recognizes and is grateful for this partnership.

The 2022 Canadian Superintendent of the Year was Bevan Daverne, Superintendent for the Golden Hills School Division (CASS). The award was presented during CASSA's 2022 conference in St. Andrews-by-the-Sea on July 7, 2022. A profile of Bevan can be found in *Leaders & Learners 2022*, newsletter Issue 3.

Also at the 2022 conference, the 2021 EXL Award recipient Denise Andre was presented with her award. The 2021 conference was a virtual event due to pandemic restrictions. Denise is the former Director of Education and Secretary Treasurer for the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSOA). A profile of Denise can be found in *Leaders & Learners 2021*, newsletter Issue 3.

Other previous EXL Award recipients include Darrel Robertson, Dr. Renee Closs, Shannon Barnett-Aikman, David Keohane, Dr. John Malloy, Joan Carr, John Crocco, Brent Kaulback, Kim Jenkins, Robert Mills, Linda Fabi, Curtis Brown, John Mackle, Johanne Messner, Geoff Williams, Carol Gray, Ron Canuel, Edie Wilde, Ed Wittchen, Roy Seidler, and John Darroch. The recipient list is updated each year on the Awards section of the CASSA website.

Do you know a leader whose work deserves to be recognized at the national level? Is a colleague in your school

district or regional affiliate making significant contributions to the work of senior system administration and education in Canada? Consider putting their name forward for the EXL Award. Nomination forms can be found on the CASSA website. Nomination packages are accepted between October 1, 2022, and May 16, 2023.

The 2023 EXL Award will be presented this July in Victoria, British Columbia. The Canadian Superintendent of the Year is also recognized at the following year's American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conference, where the American Superintendent of the Year is announced.

## About the EXL Award

This award recognizes the outstanding leadership of superintendents and directors of education from across Canada. CASSA members who have shown exemplary leadership ability and who have enhanced school administration are eligible to receive this award. An EXL Award nominee will have brought honour to themselves, their colleagues, and their profession. They will have given exemplary service to their provincial, territorial, or national professional association. They will have made significant contributions to the field of education through their service, writings, or other activities. They serve as role models and teachers to others, and they have at least five years of membership in CASSA.

CASSA is committed to highlighting the work of extraordinary leaders in education for several reasons:

- It is important to acknowledge the dedication and enthusiasm of administrators who guide children's educational experiences. Recognition is a powerful instrument for building pride in accomplishment and continued determination to pursue excellence.

- System leaders who establish the character of a particular school system's programs through the important work with school boards, school leaders, teachers, and caring parents help to determine the scope and quality of children's educational experiences.
- Children's attitudes toward learning and their perceptions of themselves as lifelong learners are established in their school years. Effective leadership, mentoring, and modelling determine whether the school jurisdiction effectively creates this environment.

CASSA also presents two other special awards from time to time: the Honourary Life Membership and the Distinguished Service Award. The nomination process and deadline are the same as those for the EXL Award.

## About the Honourary Life Membership

This award recognizes excellence in education at the national level. It is intended to honour individuals who have contributed significantly to CASSA but may also be presented to those who have made a difference at the provincial affiliate level. The latter will only happen when those provincial affiliate contributions relate to and support CASSA and its national mandate.

## About the Distinguished Service Award

This award recognizes any present or recent CASSA member who has demonstrated outstanding ability and leadership. Please note this award is open to leaders at all stages of a career in senior system administration. It is not restricted to only those who are retired or nearing retirement (the CASSA Honourary Life Membership would normally be more appropriate for those individuals). These guidelines do not exclude those who are approaching retirement from receiving the Distinguished Service Award. ○



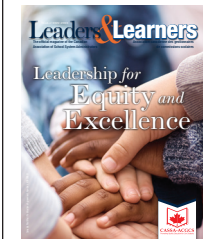
# Mark Your Calendars for CASSA's Annual Conference in 2023!



## July 5-7, 2023

### Victoria, British Columbia

The CASSA Annual Conference looks forward to seeing you in beautiful Victoria, British Columbia, in 2023! Re-connect school system leaders from across Canada to learn and share information on current topics in education. **Save the date!**



### WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO WRITE FOR US!

The CASSA Board is looking for authors interested in writing for the upcoming Winter 2023-2024 issue of *Leaders & Learners* magazine. If you have an article idea that fits into a theme about leadership, please send an abstract to Jenna Collignon, editor of the magazine, at [jcollignon@matrixgroupinc.net](mailto:jcollignon@matrixgroupinc.net), and copy [ken\\_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca](mailto:ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca). We are looking for features and success stories from each region of Canada: Eastern Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Western Canada and Northern Canada.

net, and copy [ken\\_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca](mailto:ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca). We are looking for features and success stories from each region of Canada: Eastern Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Western Canada and Northern Canada.

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