



January-February  
2011

Volume 6, Issue 37

# Leaders & Learners

THE VOICE OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS / L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ADMINISTRATEURS ET DES ADMINISTRATRICES SCOLAIRES  
WWW.CASA-ACAS.CA

## Inside this issue:

Message From The Executive Director	2
CASA Awards	2
Chris Gonnet, 1955–2011: Remembering A Leader, An Educator And A Friend	3
Profiles Of Our Sponsors: SMART Technologies	7
Report On The AASA 2011 National Conference On Education	8
Contact CASA	8
CASA's Mission, Beliefs And Goals	8
<b>Upcoming Events</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2011 CASA Annual Conference takes place from July 7 to 10 at the Niagara Falls Hotel-Crowne Plaza Fallsview in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Details have been posted at <a href="http://www.casa-acas.ca">www.casa-acas.ca</a>.</li> </ul>	

## Message From The President: Reflecting On Our Treasured Relationships

It is with great sadness that I and the rest of the CASA board of directors acknowledge the passing of **Chris Gonnet**, president-elect/treasurer for CASA.

This issue of *Leaders & Learners* includes a tribute to Chris and his work with CASA as an enthusiastic, dedicated and committed Canadian administrator and educator. During his career, Chris formed many positive relationships with all of his colleagues at CASA and within his school districts, most recently in Grande Prairie, Alberta. We will sorely miss his contributions to CASA and to Canadian education.

In the month of February, Valentine's Day marks a special day for recalling those special relationships that we all treasure in our lives. It is a day when we can reflect on our relationships with others, in our families, in our workplaces and in this case in our organization. Over time in any organization, relationships grow and develop between individuals and groups forming a level of interdependence.

For CASA, this interdependence has been demonstrated by developing collaborative relationships at CASA conferences with colleagues from across Canada in various school districts and promoting professional



Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells  
CASA president

growth and development for Canadian administrators. In addition, this interdependence has been shown through the generous support of our sponsors. This includes sponsors such as XEROX with the EXL Award, Education Canada, SMART Technologies with their continuous provision of technological support at our conferences, and IBM. This issue starts a series that highlights these sponsors and their relationship with CASA.

The commitment from these and our other CASA sponsors and the dedication of our members to support professional development at our CASA Annual Conferences create the much-required interdependence to make our Annual Conference a success for all participants.

Therefore, as we move forward preparing for the Annual Conference in Niagara Falls from July 7 to 10, 2011, we reflect on those relationships that have had an impact on our lives. Chris has left his legacy with us and his loss touches us all deeply, as we continue our work in Canadian education building relationships for now and in the future.

Thank you for your continued support of CASA and for each other as Canadian educators while we continue our work as Canadian educators to build a better Canada.

## Message From The Executive Director: Our Volunteer Leaders Strengthen Our Organization

Over the past several years, as executive director of the Canadian Association of School Administrators, I have been privileged to work with many fine leaders from various parts of Canada. These educators have contributed selflessly to the organization with a common purpose of enhancing and improving the delivery of learning for all students. They have given of their time and made financial sacrifices to come to sessions in a country where travel is always a burden. They have shared their best practices and advice. They have worked at problem solving with their colleagues and they have voiced a positive message sometimes unpopular in the political sense but always honest and deliberate. Our members have shown a true sense of leadership dealing with broad issues and studying the global and national scene.

This is what CASA does for school districts. It brings a focus to the needs of students and administrators and learns from the diversity of our leaders and our communities.

As well, CASA with its summer leadership sessions provides a forum for members to congregate and participate in sessions with other real practitioners from across Canada. It is the only true national gathering of senior administrators working with learning issues.

Within CASA we have been fortunate to have leaders step forward to volunteer their talents to enhance and drive this national perspective. Our leaders display a passion for the national cause. They volunteer; they are not paid to participate. They believe that sharing of provincial perspectives makes us stronger.



Frank Kelly  
CASA executive director

A talented and passionate man among the CASA executive was our president-elect, **Chris Gonnet**, who was committed to bettering the needs of students and to establishing a complete network of Canadian educators. Chris was willing to work with anyone who showed a positive activity that could lead to improvement. He enjoyed meeting colleagues across Canada and he was always prepared to lead and participate in a discussion. It is always hard to replace those we value. We will miss our friend Chris.

## We're Looking For A Few Good People: CASA Awards

Each year CASA presents three awards at its annual conference: the Distinguished Service Award, the Honorary Life Membership Award and the Xerox EXL Award. Information on each of these awards is available at the CASA website at [www.casa-acas.ca](http://www.casa-acas.ca) (click on "Awards" in the main menu). Nomination forms and packages are also available on the website.

Nominations for the Distinguished Service Award and Hon-

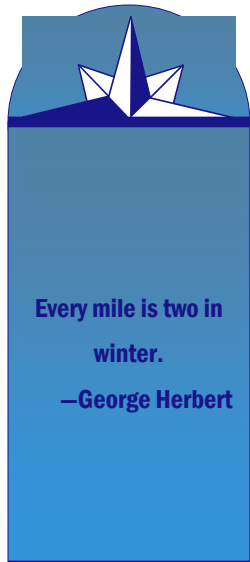
orary Life Membership are accepted between October 1 and June 30 for awards to be presented at the annual conference in July.

Nominations for the EXL Award are accepted between October 1 and May 16; nominations received after May 16 will be considered only by consent of the executive council.



Nominees for the 2008 EXL Award, presented in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

You may also know of a CASA colleague who has received another award for their work in education. We want to recognize those folks as well as our CASA award winners. Please forward your suggestions to the editor, **Tara Lee Wittchen**, at [tarawittchen@eastlink.ca](mailto:tarawittchen@eastlink.ca).



## Chris Gonnet, 1955–2011: Remembering A Leader, An Educator And A Friend

**O**n January 10, 2011, CASA lost a leader, an educator and a friend when **Chris Gonnet** passed away. Chris was CASA's president-elect and treasurer, and was set to take on the role of president in July 2011. Chris was also deeply involved in the work of the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and served as zone 1 director for that organization.

Chris was superintendent of schools for the Grande Prairie Public School District since August 2006. From January 1997 to July 2006, he was the regional superintendent of schools for the Yukon Department of Education, Public Schools Branch, in Whitehorse. His career in his beloved Yukon, however, goes back further than this. Chris was the principal at Riverdale Junior Secondary School from September 1992 to December 1996, with a seven-month secondment to the Yukon Department of Education in 1996 as grade reorganization coordinator for Whitehorse schools.

His administration career started in Alberta, first as assistant principal at Wildwood School in Wildwood (1983–84), then as principal at Dr. Folkins Community School in Chauvin (1987–88) and principal at Wainwright High School in Wainwright (1988–1992). Chris was also a teacher and a sports coach.

Chris's formal education included a Master's of Education in Educational Administration (1991), a Bachelor of Education after-degree (1979), and a Bachelor of Physical Education (1977), all earned at the University of Alberta. Chris graduated from Onoway High School in 1973 with an advanced high school diploma.



At the Calgary conference in 2009.



**Chris Gonnet, 1955-2011**  
His heart was in the Yukon.

Chris was the 2005 recipient of the CASA EXL Award. Chris's other awards include receiving the Excellence in Education Award in recognition of his leadership and initiatives undertaken to advance information technology at Riverdale School and in the Yukon, and the Rotary International Paul Harris Fellowship for his volunteer service supporting Rotary's local community and international humanitarian service projects.

His professional contributions are almost too numerous to list. The many organizations besides CASA and CASS that have benefited from Chris's energy and ideas include the Public School Boards Association of Alberta, Alberta School Boards Association, Western and Northern Canadian Curriculum Consortium, Canadian School Net Advisory Board, Zenger Miller Organization and Leadership Training Program, Connect Yukon Project, Yukon Department of Education EduNet Project, Canadian Association of Principals, Association of Yukon School Administrators, Alberta Teachers' Association Yellowhead Local, various Yukon education committees, and Rotary International.

Deepest sympathies go out to Chris's wife of 32 years, **Gloria Gonnet**; their two grown children, **Dr. Jennifer Gonnet** and **Brennan Gonnet**; and his extended family, his friends and his colleagues.

## Chris Gonnet, 1955–2011: Remembering A Leader, An Educator And A Friend

“I had the honour of dining with Chris the Wednesday evening before he passed away. We were both in Leduc to attend the College of Alberta School Superintendents board meeting for Thursday and Friday. As was the way with Chris, we had great conversation during our meal. We talked about wine, travel, Whitehorse, his children, the Edge Hockey Academy, politics of Alberta. I have always admired the relationship Chris and Gloria had and his love and pride about his children. He always gave me updates about his kids and spoke so supportively of Gloria and her work in Grande Prairie.



At the meeting the next day he was his usual self, friendly, ebullient, representing CASS well with the deputy minister and his executive team when they visited. He lunched with us on Friday and left to meet his son. Monday he was on a VC conference with Jim Brandon’s group. That evening was his last. He was there in CASS right until the end.

I will miss Chris. He became a good friend. I thought those of us who were together in and since Whitehorse would travel more together as we retired and our lives slowed down a bit. We need to know that each day is a gift.”

~**Kath Rhyason**, executive director  
College of Alberta School Superintendents

“Chris left a legacy in proving that we could and should hold our conference anywhere in Canada where we have strong membership. I remember the night he said to me, ‘Do you think they would ever consider holding it in Whitehorse?’ and then of course he helped make it one of the most successful conferences ever.”

~**Ed Wittchen**, superintendent  
Mother Earth’s Children’s Charter School  
CASA professional director

“Chris was truly a ‘master educator.’ We worked together on a number of committees, and I will always remember his visionary approach to education. He was a true change agent who always wanted what was best for students.

His district and mine worked with each other on a number of occasions. But probably the one that he and I were most proud of was an initiative where we had our central office leadership teams partner with each other. We visited his

district and then they visited ours. I will always remember how Chris’s enthusiastic approach to educating children positively affected my team. He was always ready to share a good idea with his friends. From Chris’s perspective we are all one big team, and we will miss his outstanding team play in both Alberta and Canada.

On behalf of CASA, Chris and I attended a conference in November that was held in Victoria and was sponsored by the British Columbia School Superintendent Association. I was struck by his commitment to the vision of networking central office administrative teams across the country and how confident he was that CASA was the perfect organization to accomplish that goal. He was looking forward to becoming the president of CASA.

Chris and I always found time in a conversation to talk about one or more of our loves: family, fishing, hockey or football. But it never seemed to last long, because with Chris you found yourself soon talking about students.”

~**Barry Wowk**, superintendent of schools  
St. Albert Protestant Schools

“Chris was a creative and innovative superintendent who brought many new ideas to his jurisdiction. A strong supporter of local school boards, Chris was also a leader throughout the province [of Alberta]. He was president-elect of CASA and played a key role in that organization.

Our thoughts go out to Chris’s family at this most difficult time.”

~ **David Anderson**, executive director  
Alberta School Boards Association

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Chris Gonnet, 1955–2011: Remembering A Leader, An Educator And A Friend

“I echo all of the comments about Chris and his dedication to education in Canada. He is a long-time CASA friend...we golfed together last July in Quebec City. Our thoughts are with Chris’s family. He will be missed across the country.”

~**Ken Bain**, associate director of education  
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board  
president-elect, OPSOA

“Every so often one comes upon a person in authority who is a true leader and an inspiration. One such person was Chris Gonnet, superintendent of Grande Prairie Public Schools. Chris was a friend, a colleague and a fellow champion of inspiring education. He will be missed by many, but most of all by those instructional leaders within Grande Prairie whom he supported with passion and commitment.

Chris and I worked closely together on the Real Learning First project with JC Couture of the Alberta Teachers’ Association. JC and Chris had taught together in Hinton and both had a commitment to education, innovation and learning that I have always found inspiring. Chris was a champion of the Alberta-Finland partnership for educational change and development. Wearing this hat, he and I spent time together in Stockholm, Helsinki, Jasper and Boston.

Chris was an imaginer and passionate about the core values of a school system. He made a difference. He will be missed. My heartfelt condolences to his family, his friends and his colleagues.”

~**Stephen Murgatroyd**, author and consultant

Reprinted from The Murgatroyd Blog with full acknowledgement to Stephen Murgatroyd, PhD, FRSA/Troy Media

“Over the last four years, Chris has become a close friend. His house has always been a welcoming place where you could always get a good scotch, some appies and a great conversation. He loved socializing, joking about his retirement financial plan, which according to Chris consisted of paying for his daughter Jen’s tuition in Australia and then living off her, and golfing.

I will miss Chris as a colleague, a Rotarian and a friend. I miss him as someone who was willing to share the load and build a bridge, and I thank him for the difference he has made in the lives of students in this zone and in my life.”

~**Sheldon Rowe**, superintendent of schools  
Peace Wapiti School District



Above: Chris and **Ken Bain** (left) listen to former AASA president **Mark Bielang** in Quebec City last July.

Below: Chris’s former Yukon Department of Education colleague **Bob Sharp** shares a laugh with him during the 2007 conference in Whitehorse.



“When this school year started, Chris Gonnet, Sheldon Rowe and I knew that education in Alberta would undergo significant change. We talked about many possibilities, but we never imagined this day would come so soon.

I enjoyed teasing Chris, saying that I had more experience in the Peace Country region of Alberta as superintendent and as a result I was his elder. Chris would always have a witty response to my elder comment. And truthfully, he had the most experience and wisdom in the group.

(Continued on page 6)

## Chris Gonnet, 1955–2011: Remembering A Leader, An Educator And A Friend

The role of a superintendent is hard to explain until you live it. We are pulled in many different directions and have to deal with issues that take a physical toll on an individual, yet Chris genuinely loved his work. It was the collegiality and friendship that the three of us had that made work enjoyable. Together we believed that if we would work together yet respect one another's differences, we would improve the educational system in the Peace Country. So we



Above: Chris and **Jim Gibbons** (left) talk over coffee with His Honour **James Bartleman**, the former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, in Whitehorse.

met, we phoned, we casually dropped by, we shared, we laughed, we imagined, we challenged one another, and sometimes just chatted and debriefed. But time was one of the biggest challenges for us all.

So one of us, I don't even remember who, conceived the 7am breakfast at Denny's idea. Chris would show up first, and either Sheldon or I would roll in just on time or a few minutes late. Chris often repeated a line I once used: 'I am sure that your time is far more valuable than mine.' And we would all smile and laugh. Chris's personality and wit made



Chris at the Halifax conference in 2008.

the early mornings enjoyable. We used the Denny's meetings and other meetings to discuss many different things, from ideas to improve schools to building com-

munity partnerships, to share research, to challenge and question one another's strategies and positions. And at times we met to reconcile our differences. Although we didn't always agree, we believed it was important to work together. Chris often was the bridge builder for many issues. We joked a lot, we poked fun at one another and we enjoyed one another's friendship.

What I admire most about Chris is that he believed in what he said. He had a strong vision and would ask, 'Is this in the best interest of all students, and will it help us improve?' He was passionate about making a difference and his remarkable vision became Grande Prairie Public's vision. Chris was passionate about student success in Grande Prairie Public, but he also had a passion for success at the regional, provincial and national level.

Chris also spoke passionately about the times he and his son Brennan had together. He said the times that he spent with his family were the best times of his life and he told many stories about those times. They were his fondest moments.

To Brennan, Jen and Gloria, we miss him as much as you do but we promise to champion the things that he believed in. We will be the warm and welcoming hosts that Chris always was. We will continue to work hard together to improve. Chris's legacy is who he is and what he did. His good works here on Earth are lessons for all of us."

~**Karl Germann**, superintendent  
Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools

"It is never easy to learn of the death of a colleague; thus it was terribly shocking to hear of the passing of Chris Gonnet. This marks a time of sadness for Chris's family and for a much wider group of friends and professional associates. It is a loss for the immediate school district and to Alberta and national education as well. Chris brought to our profession a remarkable dedication to his students, staff and community. In addition, his insight, leadership and appreciation of educational issues that are faced by CASA will be lost but his impact remains.

He was a true friend and professional colleague for whom each of us owes a debt of gratitude for his kindness and his laughter. It is a true understatement to say that Chris enriched our lives and that he will be sorely missed."

~**Robert T. "Bob" Mills**, director general  
Lester B. Pearson School Board

## Profiles Of Our Sponsors, Part 1: SMART Technologies

**T**hanks in part to the generous support of our sponsors, CASA is able to present a successful gathering each summer. CASA's current major sponsors include SMART Technologies, Xerox, IBM and Education Canada. From offering technical support during sessions to sponsoring coffee breaks, these companies have made it a priority to show their support for CASA. *Leaders & Learners* will highlight each of these sponsors in issues leading up to this year's conference in Niagara Falls, starting with SMART Technologies.

In 1991, SMART Technologies introduced the world's first interactive whiteboard. Just 20 years later, the company is the world's leading provider of interactive whiteboards (according to Futuresource Consulting, a leading independent research company).

SMART Technologies works to help educators get better results with technology products that support student-centred learning. The company's interactive whiteboards are used by more than 1.5 million k-12 classrooms and 30 million students around the world. They also offer interactive products like wireless slates and conferencing software.

CASA members who have attended the annual conference have likely seen the company's products in use during presentations. As well, SMART staff have been on hand to offer support and to continue to develop the relationship between the company and CASA.

In this sponsor profile, we talk with SMART Technologies' **David Lapides**. David is the director of education policy and practice at SMART and is based out of the company's world headquarters in Calgary. He's been with the company



**David Lapides** explains some of the many features of SMART Technologies' whiteboards to CASA's **Frank Kelly**.

# SMART™

since 2004. David was also featured in a Faces in the Crowd profile in the November 2009 issue of *Leaders & Learners*.

*How long has SMART Technologies been a sponsoring partner with CASA?*

**David:** I believe we became a sponsor in 2007.

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

**David:** As a CASA sponsor, we try to provide the membership with information, insight and our global perspective on the effective use of ICT to support collaboration among teachers and students for the sake of improving learning outcomes. Of course, we are also pleased to provide support in a number of forms for the annual conference in July.

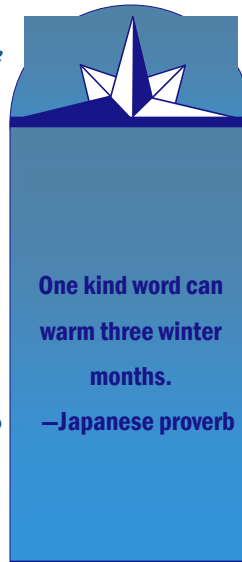
*Why does SMART Technologies like this partnership?*

**David:** Every time we participate in a CASA event, we learn a lot about the current state of Canadian education: what's working, what could change for the better, challenges, risks and so on. SMART needs to understand these things to make good decisions about our education business.

*What does SMART Technologies see as the benefits it gets from developing and maintaining this relationship with an organization like CASA over the years?*

**David:** We learn a lot from CASA as a whole, from the organization's leadership and from individual members. SMART is very committed to continuous improvement in our offering for educators, and we get wonderful insight and guidance on how to improve from organizations such as CASA.

*Thank you, David.*



## Contact CASA:

1123 Glenashton Drive  
Oakville, ON  
L6H 5M1  
Canada

T: (905) 845-2345  
F: (905) 845-2044  
frank\_kelly@opsoa.org

[www.casa-acas.ca](http://www.casa-acas.ca)

Editor: Tara Lee Wittchen  
©2011 CASA

## 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.

# Report On The American Association Of School Administrators 2011 National Conference On Education

By Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells  
CASA president

**R**obert Mills, CASA's Quebec regional director, and I attended the American Association of School Administrators 2011 National Conference on Education's governance-related meetings in Denver, Colorado, on Tuesday, February 15, and Wednesday, February 16.

As a result of the meetings, a recommendation for a new mission statement for the AASA was being proposed as "The American Association of School Administrators advocates for the highest quality public education for all students, and develops and supports school system leaders."

The highlight of the meeting was US Secretary of Education **Arne Duncan** sharing an update with educational leaders about current issues in American education.

On Thursday, February 17, **John Mackle**, director of education for the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, received the Superintendent of the Year Award for Canada.

**Michael Fullan** was the keynote speaker following the award presentation on "Motion Leadership: How to Make All Systems Go" and was well received by delegates. The AASA attracted 1,400 participants for this year's conference.

Finally, Discovery Education hosted an event with **Jeff Corwin**, giving us a chance to view the latest content from Discovery to conclude the day's events.



The AASA conference was a wonderful opportunity to network and experience global professional development with our American neighbours.