

FALL 2017 VOL.19 NO. 3

# OPC Register

THE MAGAZINE FOR ONTARIO'S PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS



## Leading Mentally Healthy Schools

What principals need to know

▶ OPC'S NEW PRESIDENT ▶ BROTALK WITH KIDS HELP PHONE ▶ CUSTODY & ACCESS



The Ontario Principals' Council held our annual Silent Auction at our Provincial Council Meeting on May 5, 2017. The auction was a huge success, raising over \$7,800, donated to the Because I Am a Girl Campaign.


**Ontario Principals' Council**

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# Silent Auction

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# THANK YOU

We would like to thank the school districts that donated items for the auction, as well as the following contributing organizations:

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**Because I Am a Girl** is an international movement by the aid organization Plan. The campaign is made to address the issue of gender discrimination around the world. The goal of the campaign is to promote the rights of girls and bring millions of girls out of poverty around the world.



For more information on The Ontario Principals' Council or how you can donate please visit [www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca).



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Cover Illustration by Sébastien Thibault

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# Hello, Goodbye

## Transitions at the OPC



Much like the popular television show “Hello, Goodbye,” the OPC has experienced a number of “Hello, Goodbye” moments this past year, with more on the horizon as we say farewell to extraordinary long-standing senior staff

who have been with us almost from our inception. It is heart-wrenching to say goodbye to these pioneers, but also necessary to let them move on to their next adventure. On the heels of these goodbyes, we are saying “hello,” welcoming new, talented minds with fresh ideas and ways of looking at our core purposes and service.

The OPC is nimble and highly adaptive, characteristics nurtured by our Executive Directors; Jack Martin, Mike Benson and most recently Ian McFarlane. After his six years at the helm, it’s now time for us to say goodbye and thanks to Ian, a talented leader whose style has been to coach those around him in support of our collective best efforts and commit-

ment. Ian served the OPC as Councillor, Executive Member, President and Protective Services Consultant before becoming Executive Director. On behalf of all of us who have been mentored, benefited from and supported by your leadership, Ian, thank you.

This column is also a form of “hello” from me, as I assumed the Executive Director role earlier this summer. I am not new to the OPC, having been one of the external legal counsel since our inception and then a member of the senior staff for 15 years. However, the Executive Director role is unique and therefore “new” in so many respects. It represents a transition from providing legal service to Members and legal advice to the organi-

zation to a position focused on cultivating relationships, managing our operations and supporting a high-functioning Executive and staff team.

As we approach our 20th year, we are seizing the opportunity to reflect and refresh. Let me give you a sense of some of the projects that are underway or recently concluded:

- We are midway through a governance review re-examining our core policies and processes to ensure that they maximize our ability to serve Members. Executive and Council will both be engaged in this process and we’ll ultimately be sharing the outcomes of it with you.
- Our new logo has been launched (see the next page of the magazine), a simple, clean design that highlights the “P” and by extension our singular commitment to the professional work of principals and vice-principals.
- Our website is being refreshed to make it more user friendly and its many resources more accessible.
- In December, we’ll be moving to a new office at 20 Queen St. West, just south of our current location. It will provide improved accessibility for Members, more space and resources for professional development and a safe and high-functioning work place for our staff.
- We’ve released a research study that examines the important and unique role vice-principals perform and opportunities to better support them in their role.
- Our focused pursuit of panel pay equity continues through advocacy



Ontario Principals' Council  
 180 Dundas Street West, 25th floor  
 Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z8  
 Tel: 416-322-6600 or 1-800-701-2362  
 Fax: 416-322-6618  
 Website: www.principals.ca  
 Email: admin@principals.ca

and will, if necessary, do so through legal channels.

- In the spring we negotiated an Extension Agreement that secures ongoing monetary increases, provides stability for local and provincial terms and conditions of employment through August 31, 2020 and provides system investment money that will be spent locally once local OPC associations and school boards mutually agree upon project(s).
- We are also working to finalize the new provincial health benefits trust (ELHT), exploring the opportunity for a provincial Principal/Vice-Principal Long-term Disability plan, and are part of the working group finalizing a report on crisis supports for principals and vice-principals.

As we approach our 20th anniversary, we are embracing many opportunities to better serve you. The key to our collective success is your engagement and partnership. Reach out and share your ideas and feedback with me, President Mary Linton, Executive Members, Councillors and OPC staff.

The OPC is more than 5,000 Members and 20 years strong. The next chapter, which we'll write together, will be even better. ▲



**Allyson Otten**

✉ aotten@principals.ca

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**Rachel Gruber**, interim assistant editor  
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**Dawn Martin**, proofreader  
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*The Register* is the proud recipient of the following awards:



# Happenings at OPC ...

Highlights from the fourth annual Technology-Enabled Learning and Leading Institute for principals and vice-principals this past August. Keynote speakers Jennifer Casa-Todd (near right), Janette Hughes (centre) and Beth Holland (far right) engaged with over 235 participants from across Ontario.



Authors Peter Gamwell (left) and Jane Daly (right) at the launch of their new book *The Wonder Wall*.



This summer International School Leadership (ISL) held workshop sessions with educational leaders from around the world.  
 Top: Singapore  
 Middle Left: Aruba, China, Norway, Russia, Scotland and Sweden  
 Middle Right: Peru  
 Bottom Left: Jamaica.



Our May Council meeting opened with a bell ringing and greeting by the Official Town Crier for Canada, Jason Pratt.



# Unplug & Unwind

Tips to help school leaders disconnect and de-stress

The school administrator's role has become increasingly complex, and this complexity has contributed to work intensification and higher stress levels. Ever-increasing access to technology has made it harder to leave work behind at

the end of the day. Research has shown the health benefits associated with unplugging after hours. One study found that temporarily disconnecting improved memory, posture and led to better sleep (Fast Company, 2015). France, Germany and Brazil have passed laws supporting workers' right to disconnect after hours to improve work/life balance and reduce stress-related illnesses (Global News, 2016).

Mental well-being has become a more pertinent topic in the world of education. Administrators aspiring to lead mentally healthy schools can start by focusing on personal wellness. Disconnecting for a few hours is a good way to recharge if you're feeling burnt out or overwhelmed.

A few small steps can have a big impact on digitally-driven stress.

## Close the Bedroom Door on Technology

Our reliance on technology has had damaging impacts on our quality of

sleep. It's common for people to scroll their favourite apps or check emails before bed. The blue light emitted from electronic devices affects levels of the sleep hormone melatonin, shifting the body's natural clock, which negatively impacts health (Scientific American, 2015). By ditching the phone before bed for a book or relaxing music, your sleep should improve.

## Designate Device-Free Time

Set aside firm 'technology-free' times at home. Apps such as Breakfree, Moment or QualityTime can track your phone use and set daily limits and 'do not disturb' times. Start by picking a time when you're comfortable to be away from your devices. Try a tech-free dinner and encourage meaningful conversations at the table. Once you've picked a time that works, keep your devices in a different room. This will reduce the urge to check on notifications – out of sight, out of mind!

## Remove Work Accounts from Personal Devices

Logging into a work email on a personal phone can create temptation to stay on top of work after hours. When checking a personal text or social media accounts, the urge to check your work email will be there. If possible, keep a separate device for work communication and allow yourself to check it only once each night. If this isn't an option, only log in to work accounts on stationary devices.

## Meditate

Meditation is a great way to reduce stress and it can take many forms. It's accessible and can be done almost anywhere. Take a break from emails for a few minutes of mindful breathing. Read a book, go for a walk, listen to music or just 'tune out.' Try meditating after work to clear away the stress of the day. Try a meditation class, a guided YouTube tutorial or cultivate your own practice. Incorporating meditation into your life will reduce stress and provide a break from the digital world. ▲

✉ rgruber@principals.ca



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# OPC's



# New Preside



## Quietly leading and advocating for Members

By Peggy Sweeney

Photography by Martin Brown

On July 1 each year, a new practising principal starts in the role of Provincial President of the OPC. The President is elected as part of the Provincial Executive by the Provincial Council (which acts as our Board of Directors). These elections take place each May. The one-year term ensures that our President is always closely aligned with what is happening in schools, having recently left one and returning to one within the year. Serving on the Executive for a number of years in many positions (Member-at-Large, Vice-President and President-Elect) before moving into the President's role provides an opportunity to become closely involved with the organization and the issues over several years. This multi-year preparation has served the OPC well, and ensures that our current President is ready to dive right in.

This year, we welcome Mary Linton of Toronto.

nt

“Every administrator I know makes sure they are taking care of the students and the staff. But are they taking care of themselves? It’s very difficult to be a leader if you’re not at your best.”



Mary Linton grew up in Scarborough. Even now she fondly recalls her first schools. “One of the things I remember about my elementary school was the pride we had in all the activities we took part in. And the teachers were awesome. I was exposed very early to sports, which I loved.”

In grade 7, she started playing volleyball, which became her best and favourite sport. “My former coaches would refer to me as Bambi on ice, because I really wasn’t coordinated,” she laughs. “I was the same height in grade 6 that I am now. But my coaches took the time to train me and work with me and other girls and I just flourished. It made me realize how important a role model can be for kids. Another great role model in my life is my mother. She taught me the value of hard work and perseverance.”

Mary continued playing volleyball throughout high school, excelling enough to earn a scholarship to the University of Arizona, where she played on the varsity team for four years while studying Business Administration. When she returned to Canada, she played nationally for a year until an injury ended her sports career.

“Now I had to figure out what I was going to do with my life. I took a job as an educational assistant while I tried to figure it out. It was there that a superintendent asked if I had ever considered teaching, which I hadn’t.”

After about a year in the job, which she really enjoyed, she decided to apply to teacher’s college. She went to Columbia University in New York, which offered a Master’s program, and was able to do her pre-service work to qualify for teaching in Ontario. To help pay for school, she was an assistant coach for the varsity volleyball team.

Mary then returned to Canada and was hired into her first teaching job in Scarborough, at the school she had attended in grades 7 and 8. She taught for seven years in the Toronto board. “Teaching was a great experience for me. I had many positive role models and mentors who encouraged me to go into administration.” In 2000, she decided to make the move, and has been a school leader ever since.

“I was a single administrator for nine years, so I understand those challenges. What I learned is that relationships are really important. When we went through things like the work-to-rule and strikes, and all the difficulties those entail, it was nice to have roots in the school so that the staff knew it was not personal. We were able to bounce back fairly well.”

Mary’s introduction to the OPC came through the professional learning arm. “I took a number of workshops and completed the Experienced Principals’ course. I also instructed the equity elective for that program and was an Odyssey Committee member for two years. In my own board, I became very involved in the Toronto School Administrators Association (TSAA) working as the PD Chair to plan conferences and other learning opportunities for our 1,000 members.”

In 2008, Mary became a Provincial Councillor for the OPC, attending meetings for the first time with colleagues from around the province. “It became clear that, even though we were from many different boards, the conversations we were having locally in Toronto were similar to

those taking place in other areas of the province. I really enjoyed sitting around the table and talking to different administrators, hearing about their issues. The exchange of information provided me with different strategies that we could use at the local level.”

Mary stayed involved with Provincial Council, being elected to the Executive as a Member-at-Large, Vice-President and then President. “I stepped up for the role of President because I felt that I could make a difference, that I had strong experiences to offer and would be able to bring something positive to the organization. I was humbled when many of the other Councillors encouraged me to run. So I put my name forward and here I am!”

As Mary looks to the year ahead, one of the goals she has is to continue to strengthen Member engagement. “We always have to look for new or better ways to do this. There is a lot of information out there, but principals and vice-principals are overwhelmed with information right now. So I want to find ways to really highlight what is available through the OPC so that our Councillors have the information to go back to their boards and talk about the work we are doing at the provincial level.

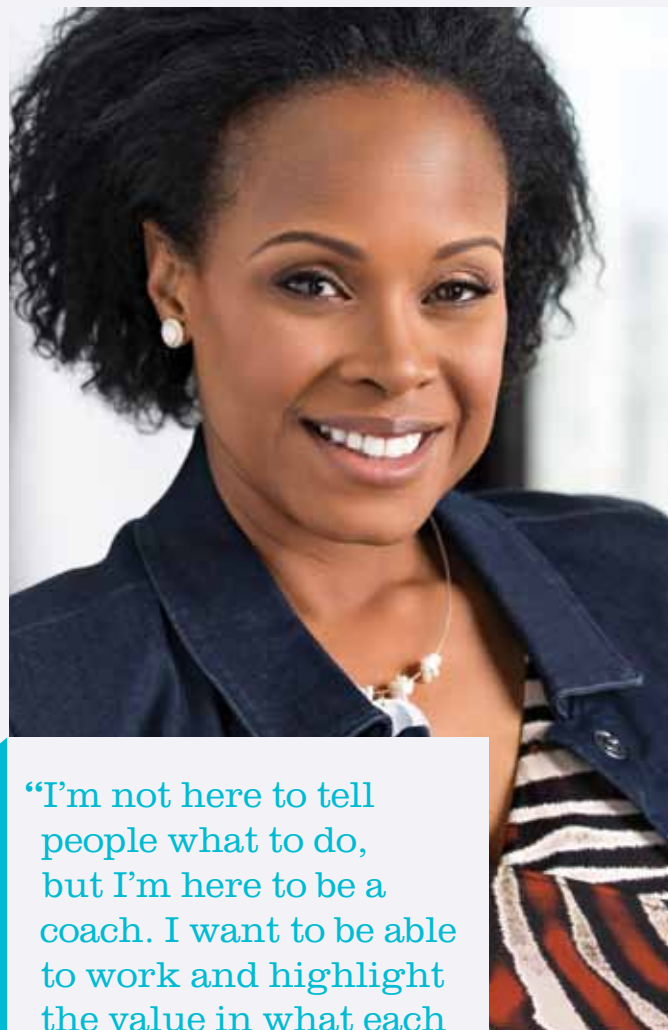
“Wellness is also very important. We need to be promoting ways to take care of ourselves. Every administrator I know makes sure they are taking care of the students and the staff. But are they taking care of themselves? It’s very difficult to be a leader if you’re not at your best. Sometimes administrators need to be reminded that we are important too. It’s almost like we need to give ourselves permission to take a break.”

2018 also marks the date of the next provincial election. The outcome will determine the governing party and education policy for the next several years. “This will be another opportunity for us to meet with and talk to MPPs, and to advocate for the issues of most concern to our Members. While we do this political advocacy work every year, it obviously takes on more importance in an election year. Our goal is to give MPPs an understanding or perspective of what it’s like to be a principal or a vice-principal. Often they hear from other stakeholders. But no one else can tell them what it’s like to run, manage and be responsible for the whole school.

“In the time that I’ve been on the Executive, I’ve really seen a better understanding from the MPPs as to the issues that administrators face. We’ve had good discussions and have developed positive relationships to help them appreciate the issues. If you want to know about what’s happening in schools, you need to talk to all the stakeholders. And we are an important stakeholder.”

One issue that needs further advocacy is panel equity. “It is clear from the membership that administrators should be paid the same, regardless of their panel. This continues to be a priority for the OPC.”

Another issue that the OPC will continue working on is Reg 274. “Our Members continue to struggle with this hiring practice. Seniority-based hiring has been very difficult because we can’t always get the right person in the role. When we’re looking at communities with different needs, we can’t just rely on seniority and assume that the first person on the list will be the best fit for the school. The regulation



“I’m not here to tell people what to do, but I’m here to be a coach. I want to be able to work and highlight the value in what each OPC Member brings to the table.”

makes it very difficult for administrators to hire the staff to meet the needs of their particular community. We know this is a long-standing issue, but it’s an important one, and one we are hoping to get some movement on.”

The coming year will also be a celebratory one as the OPC marks its 20th anniversary in 2018. “Not all of our Members were around when the OPC was first established. I want to be able to look back and reflect on all the positive things that have taken place since we became an organization and all the positive work that has been done.” That theme will be the focus of the 20th anniversary forum that will take place in April, 2018: Looking Back, Leading Forward.

What does Mary think she brings to this role? “I’m an experienced principal, experienced in listening to a variety of perspectives. As Chair of the TSAA, with 1,000 members, I travelled and met with groups of principals and vice-principals every week. I understand that there is often no one quick fix, no one answer to a problem that is going to work for everyone.

“I think the most important thing is making sure that we hear what people are experiencing. I’m not here to tell people what to

do, but I'm here to be a coach. I want to be able to work and highlight the value in what each OPC Member brings to the table. We all bring unique and special experiences. I'm good at drawing those out and making sure that everyone will have a voice, even those who don't tend to be the ones who speak up all the time."

Away from the school, Mary's greatest passion and joy is her daughter, 14-year-old Janae. "She is the reason for everything that I do. I do it to set a good example for her and to ensure that she has opportunities to take part in dif-

**"When we're looking at communities with different needs, we can't just rely on seniority and assume that the first person on the list will be the best fit for the school."**



ferent things. I make sure that she gets to her activities – mostly dance, which is her passion – and spends time on the less exciting things like homework. That's my quality time.

"I also have a partner, Joe, and am trying to develop more of a work-life balance with him. It's important to have someone in your corner supporting you, and he is in mine. It's ironic, because taking care of ourselves is something I advocate for, something I encourage my colleagues to do, and yet I don't always do a very good job myself making sure I am living that balance. I need to do better at practicing what I preach!"

When I ask Mary about her hobbies, she pauses. "I still like to work out, although I'm not as regular as I'd like to be. Learning is a hobby for me, and I'm taking a course right now, so most of my spare time goes into reading materials for my course. I guess one of my goals this year will have to be finding more hobbies!"

The year ahead is one Mary is looking forward to. She knows that representing more than 5,000 OPC Members is a big job, and an important one. And she has a message for all of them. "I'm approachable. Please reach out when I come to your district meeting. If you don't want to raise your hand and ask a question during the meeting, come and see me after. I'll stick around to answer questions, have a chat or just say hello. Developing new relationships and meeting new people is one of the things I am most looking forward to."

Mary is often the quiet one in the back of the room, the worker bee who gets things done. While she doesn't seek out the limelight, she understands that sometimes that is the place that she has to be. As she begins her term as the OPC President, she looks forward to being at the front or the back of the room, wherever she is most needed. ▲

✉ psweeney@principals.ca

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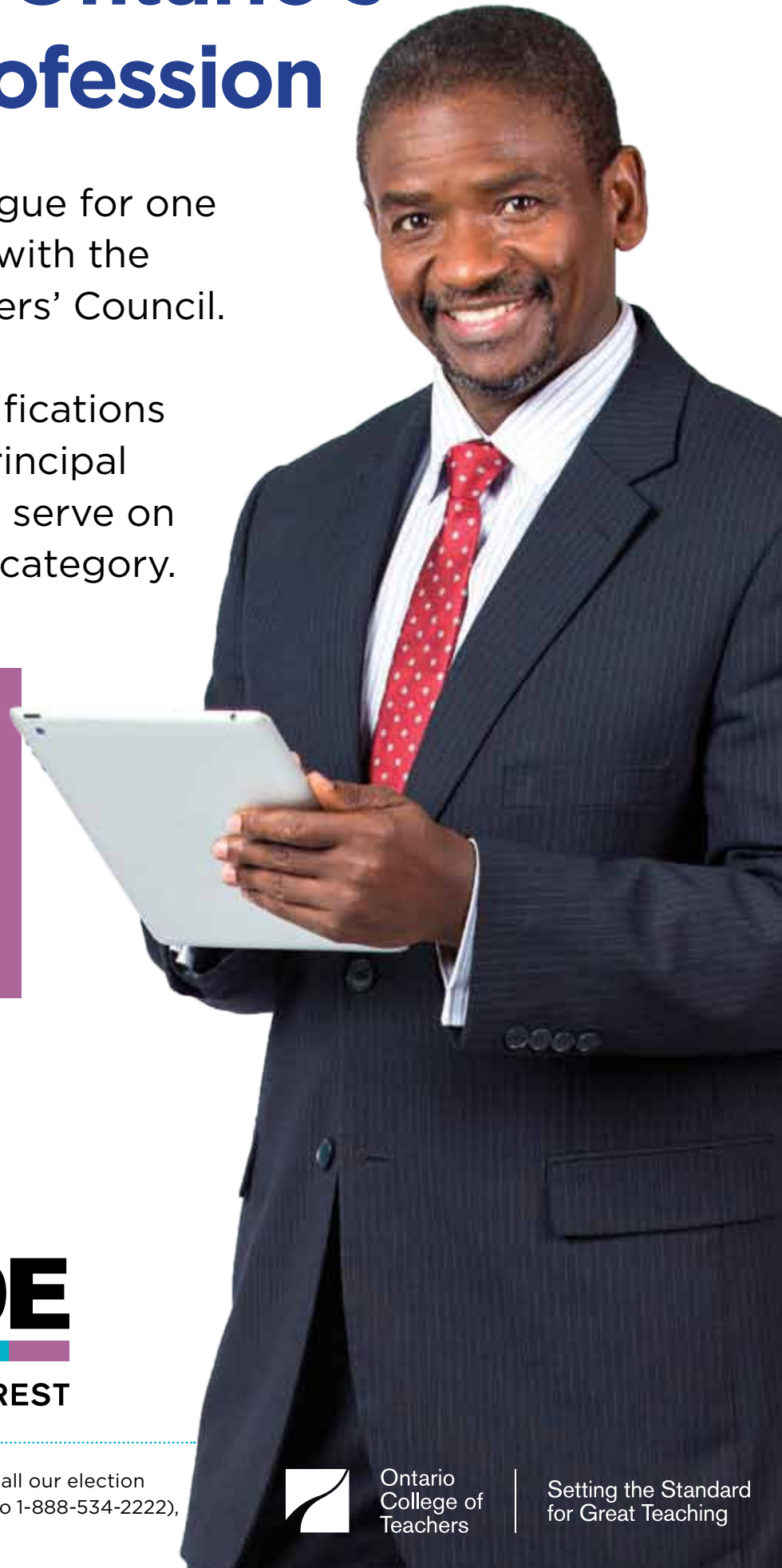
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# Custody & Access

Navigating challenging waters when dealing with changing family dynamics

By OPC Professional Services Team

Illustration by Doug Panton

School administrators continuously work with families and their school team to improve outcomes for students. The concept of family is everchanging, and it is important to understand who has access to a child and their student records, and who needs to be consulted when there are events at school that impact the student.

When there is a breakdown in the family, it is hoped that the parents/guardians will keep their children's best interests at heart despite whatever disagreements might arise between them; ideally, they will work together to reach an agreement regarding where the children live, how that arrangement will work and how to support the children with their educational goals. However, this is not always the case, and from time to time the parents' disagreements arrive at the school's doorstep.

This article outlines issues regarding custody, access, the roles of Family Court and the Office of the Children's Lawyer.

## Custody

Parents are responsible for their children even if they do not live together. When the parents' relationship is amicable, their respective roles can be worked out through a parenting plan, a separation agreement or court order on consent. If parents cannot agree, the court makes decisions on custody, access and support payments all directed by the child's best interests.

Custody refers to the right and responsibility to care for a child. It includes the right to have the child live with the parent and to make decisions for that child up to age 18. With respect to schooling, it includes the right to register the child in an eligible school, select program options, approve extracurricular activities and appeal school based decisions.

Custody can be

- **Sole** – one parent has exclusive custody of their children
- **Joint** – both parents share custody even if one parent lives apart from the children; parents must demonstrate they are willing to cooperate on matters affecting their children and all decisions are mutually made
- **Shared** – parents agree to joint custody and each parent spends at least 40 per cent of their time with the children
- **Split Custody** – one parent has custody of one or more children and the other parent has custody of the remaining children.

## Access

Where the parents agree, or the court orders sole custody to one parent, it is usual that the other parent has access rights to see, spend time with and receive information about the children. These agreements are often quite detailed and will spell out the days, times and circumstances

under which the access parent can see the children. For school purposes, the access parent may be able to take the children off property for lunch or may be able to pick them up from school for overnight visits on certain days of the week. The access parent does not make decisions on behalf of the children and must defer to the custodial parent.

Both the federal *Divorce Act* and Ontario's *Children's Law Reform Act* indicate an access parent has the right to "information" about their child's education. This leaves much to interpretation and administrators should turn to their school board for guidance. Some boards interpret this to mean the access parent has the right to attend parent-teacher interviews, accompany the child on field trips, attend sports or music events and attend IPRCs. In short, the parent can be involved with the child's school life up to the point of decision making. Other boards take a narrower view of "information" and restrict the access parent to a copy of the report card and a telephone interview between the teacher and the parent.

If a parent has been granted supervised access to their children, the school should interpret this to mean the court feels there is some reason the parent is not responsible or safe to be left alone with the children. Administrators should take this seriously and seek advice on how to proceed before releasing children from the school's care to this parent.

## Family Court

Family Court is a specialized division of the Ontario court system that focuses on matters that affect marriage and children. The judges can call on other agencies (e.g., Office of the Children's Lawyer) to assist in reaching decisions. When

## From time to time the parents' disagreements arrive at the SCHOOL'S DOORSTEP.

children are involved, the court's focus is on the "best interests" of the child. A school administrator may be called to Family Court to bring the Ontario School Record (OSR). Technically, the OSR should not be used in a court proceeding, but it is often called as evidence, so administrators should seek direction from the board if they are subpoenaed.

Occasionally, a parent may ask a principal to attend court to give evidence on their fitness to parent, or the other spouse's lack thereof. The administrator should only attend if subpoenaed and should limit their answers to factual information about what they have observed personally. For example, principals are not qualified to diagnose medical health but can say the child appears to be well nourished and able to participate fully in school life. Administrators are not psychologists and so should not be commenting on the child's mental health but can say the child appears happy and well adjusted. It's important in court to answer questions in your areas of expertise – school life and education – and to maintain your focus on the factual information in your possession, rather than on opinion evidence, where possible. You will be subject to cross-examination and want to ensure that you come across to the court as objective and credible.

Similarly, a parent sometimes asks a principal to write a letter of support endorsing their parenting that they intend to use in court. This is done to establish their fitness for custody of the children. It is wise to avoid writing these





letters in cases where one parent is pitted against another, as taking sides is rarely useful to the school, which ultimately will continue to need to engage both parents. Furthermore, a principal only sees a portion of the child's life at school. Administrators do not have a complete picture of the parent's abilities or capacity for effective parenting. This can be a difficult situation to maneuver, especially if the parent making the request has been a contributor to school life. Further, under Family Law Rules, these letters are entered into evidence and the principal may be cross-examined by the other spouse's counsel about the contents of the letter. A principal may find themselves being discredited not only on the letter itself, but also as a professional.

#### Office of the Children's Lawyer

The Office of the Children's Lawyer (OCL) is an independent law office within Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General. It represents the interests of children before the court in custody and access matters, child welfare proceed-

ings, and civil litigation and estate matters. The OCL consists of both lawyers and social workers.

The OCL only becomes involved in children's cases when authorized to do so by a court order. Involvement in child protection cases is mandatory when ordered. Involvement in custody and access cases is discretionary. The OCL only represents children when directed by a court order. The court may order OCL involvement or either parent may bring a motion/application before the court to request the services of the OCL. Under section 38(3) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, if a court determines that legal representation is desirable to protect a child's interests, the court shall direct that legal representation be provided for the child. A party brings a motion/application to request the services of the OCL.

When the OCL visits a school, it may request to view the student's OSR, meet/interview the student and/or meet/interview the staff and/or principal.

Principals often wonder if they will be provided with a copy of the court order in child protection



**It's important in court to answer questions in your areas of expertise**

**- SCHOOL LIFE AND EDUCATION - and to maintain your focus on the factual information in your possession.**

An advertisement for a reader survey. The background features a desk with a laptop keyboard, a green notebook, a pencil, and a small potted plant. The text is overlaid on this background.

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cases. Section 45(8) of the *Child and Family Services Act* prohibits the publication of any identifying information about a child, a child's parents or a member of the child's family in a child protection case. As a result, in child protection matters, the OCL will not provide a principal with a court order; only a release signed by the parents or CAS where applicable. In custody/access matters, the OCL will provide a principal with a court order and a release signed by the parents or CAS.

The right of the OCL to access the OSR originates from the custody/access and/or child protection court orders. In both orders, the OCL is entitled to "receive copies of all professional reports and all records relating to the child(ren)." In addition, the OCL's practice is to require a parent or guardian to complete a standard release form. The release is in accordance with the court order and sets out the role of the OCL in its entirety, including its right to access student records. The OCL's practice is to require the parent to forward to the school a signed release of information and to have the parent telephone the school providing verbal consent. Where a principal does not have a signed release from the parent, they should telephone the OCL and request a copy. Where a parent refuses to sign the release, this would violate the court order and the

OCL could then bring the matter back to the court to compel the parent to cooperate.

The OCL may also rely on the court orders to meet and interview students at school. Section 4(a) of the Custody/Access Order and section 3(a) of the Child Protection Order empower the OCL to "make a full, independent enquiry of all the circumstances relating to the best interests of the child." Some school boards have policies and procedures in place regarding access to students by third-party professionals that may apply. Administrators should review these policies and procedures and consult the appropriate superintendent for further direction. However, in the absence of such policies and/or direct advice from the superintendent, the principal stands in *locus parentis* and has responsibility for the child the OCL wishes to interview. If the OCL comes to the school to interview the child and has parental consent to do so, the interview should proceed, although it should be in a location where the conversation can be confidential but within view. In the absence of parental consent (including CAS), a principal should not agree to the inter-

view unless or until the board approves it or parental consent can be obtained.

If the student does not wish to meet with the OCL, the OCL is empowered by court order to

**Principals and vice-principals dealing with  
CHILD CUSTODY ISSUES  
should take direction from their board lawyer  
or seek advice from the OPC ...**

contact the student. It is not up to the student to determine whether they will meet with the OCL. However, the OCL's protocol is not to compel a reluctant student to speak; the usual response is to reschedule and/or counsel the child.

The OCL does not have the authority to remove a student from school to meet with the student unless the parent grants permission (or the child is 18 or older). It is very rare for the OCL to attempt to remove a student since the purpose of conducting an investigation on school grounds is to obtain the views of the principal/teacher and/or to view the student in a school setting.

The OCL is empowered by court order to "make a full, independent inquiry of all the circumstances relating to the best interests of the child." This includes the right to interview teachers and/or other staff members who may have information relating to the best interests of the child. The OCL's protocol is to interview the principal first and determine whether it is necessary to interview teachers and/or other staff members.

**In Conclusion**

Principals and vice-principals dealing with child custody issues should take direction from their board lawyer or seek advice from the OPC to ensure they have a full understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities. When working with families, it is important to understand the changing nature of relationships and to encourage parents to focus on making decisions in the best interests of their children. ▲

**NOTE: This article has been updated from an earlier one published in The OPC Register, Fall 2011, Vol.13. No.3.**

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## Vice-Principals' Work

### More than being an instructional leader

By Katina Pollock, Fei Wang and Cameron Hauseman

Teachers are often encouraged to apply for the vice-principal role because they are exceptional, with the understanding that the role has a large instructional leadership component. In reality, however, this is often not the case. As a research team, we conducted a province-wide study of vice-principals' work in 2016, and discovered that, overwhelmingly, vice-principals do not spend nearly as much time on instructional leadership as they do on administrative tasks and student discipline.

Contesting understandings of instructional leadership, misalignment between job expectations and reality and work intensification for both vice-principals and principals has resulted not only in decreased interest in the vice-principal job, but also mismatched professional learning opportunities for individuals entering that position.

Our study sought to understand vice-principals' work in changing times. This included determining the types of duties, activities and practices vice-principals engage in on a daily basis, as well as the challenges and possibilities they face in their current work. In September 2016, an online survey was sent to 2,437 OPC vice-principals; we received 1,232 individual responses; 862 surveys were available for analysis after eliminating incomplete surveys. This article highlights the factors that impact the prevalence of instructional leadership in the daily work of vice-principals.

#### DEFINING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Although the Ontario Leadership Framework indicates that both principals and vice-principals are prominently involved in instructional leadership (Institute for Education Leadership, 2013), there is limited large-scale, system-level knowledge and understanding of the specifics of the vice-principal role (Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013; Armstrong, 2009). Many existing research studies have not been helpful in this regard: when vice-principals are included in large studies, they tend to be grouped in with principals (Armstrong, 2014), further obscuring the prevalence of instructional leadership in the vice-principal role.

The overall aim of instructional leadership is the improvement and support of professional educators' instructional

practices within a school building to support student success and achievement, but instructional leadership can be understood in several ways. The more traditional way of thinking about instructional leadership is a “hands-on” approach: suitable candidates have a strong pedagogical background, are curriculum- and instruction-focused and work directly with teachers both within the classroom and alongside them during professional learning opportunities. Proponents of this approach model best practices for instruction with teachers and use mentoring strategies (Hornig & Loeb, 2010).

Others understand instructional leadership from an organizational management perspective. School leaders engage in instructional leadership through hiring practices, class assignments, scheduling, budgeting, designing professional learning opportunities that concentrate on curriculum and instruction, promoting a positive work/learning environment and supporting overall instruction in the school (Fullan, 2014; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013). Often, school leaders use a combination of traditional and organizational management approaches in the instructional leadership role.

## THE WORK OF VICE-PRINCIPALS

According to our study data, vice-principals’ work can be categorized into four general categories.

### 1. Classroom teaching

Nearly a third of vice-principals are assigned teaching duties in addition to their roles and responsibilities as vice-principals. 49.2% of elementary vice-principals reported having teaching duties, while only 12.3% of secondary vice-principals did. The majority of teaching duties are not considered part of a vice-principal’s formal position nor as part of instructional leadership responsibility. The tasks and activities required in classroom teaching are not the same as organizational leadership; in fact, for many participants, teaching interferes with their role as a vice-principal.

### 2. Discipline and management-focused activities

Vice-principals spend most of their time engaged in management-focused activities, including 8.3 hours per week managing student discipline concerns, the largest amount of their time, and 3.9 hours per week on management-related tasks (*internal school management*).

## Participating vice-principals indicated they would like to be more engaged in duties, tasks and activities rooted in traditional instructional leadership.

The focus on student discipline is reflected in existing research that claims that vice-principals are largely responsible for reacting to the daily interruptions often related to student discipline (Nanavati & McCollough, 2003; Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002). These types of tasks are not considered instructional leadership as they do not involve interaction with professional educators to inform classroom practice. Almost half of the survey sample indicated they would prefer to spend less time engaged in student discipline.

### 3. Supporting students

Vice-principals are also involved in activities associated with supporting students, spending 5.7 hours per week *being visible and supervising students* and 5.3 hours per week engaged in activities that *support student academic needs*. Participants reported being involved in *supporting students with special needs* for 4.3 hours per week and 4.1 hours per week working with parents. It is unclear, however, whether these practices are connected to improving and supporting instructional practices within the school. For example, vice-principals spend the most time being visible and supervising students, but these activities are more about building positive relationships directly with students and creating safe school environments through supervision, not about supporting or improving instructional practices with teachers in school.

Supporting student academics and supporting students with special needs can be a part of instructional leadership if vice-principals’ actions somehow support classroom teachers in improving instruction for students; however, our qualitative data analysis indicates that this is not the case.

### 4. Curriculum and instructional leadership

Overall, participating vice-principals indicated they would like to be more engaged in duties, tasks and activities rooted in traditional instructional leadership. On average, vice-principals indicated being involved in *curriculum and instructional leadership* for only

## FACT

Nearly a **THIRD** of vice-principals are assigned teaching duties in addition to their roles and responsibilities as vice-principals.

2.7 hours per week, and many of their comments expressed dissatisfaction with this number. Participants named instructional leadership as their 10th most frequent task. At 88.1%, the clear majority of vice-principals indicated wanting to spend more time on tasks and activities associated with instructional leadership.

## TENSIONS IN VICE-PRINCIPALS' WORK

Our data analysis suggested that there is a divergence between the amount of actual time and work dedicated to non-instructional leadership practices (such as classroom teaching and discipline and management-focused activities) and what vice-principals believe they should be and want to be involved in. Tensions emerge when work intensification prevents vice-principals from engaging in the instructional leadership work they are more interested in doing.

### Misalignment between expectations and actual work

Of the survey respondents, 74.6% were satisfied with their job, most of the time. Most vice-principals felt supported by their principal, and 88.3% of the sample agreed that they know how to get their job done. Further, 85.7% of participating vice-principals indicated that their school was a good place to work and 83.4% felt that their job makes a difference in the school community. Generally speaking, the overall workforce has a positive outlook.

However, a little over a third (35%) of vice-principals felt the position aligned *very much* with their expectations and only 3.7% indicated that the vice-principalship was *exactly* what they expected. 3.2% were not sure. More importantly, half (49.2%) of the sample indicated that being a vice-principal was only *some-what* what they had expected, with an additional 8.9% of vice-principals reporting the job was *not at all* what they expected.

Vice-principals provided several reasons for choosing to become a vice-principal. These included the opportunity to participate in a variety of different job duties (51.5%) and having a greater impact on students (78.5%). 73% of survey respondents also viewed it as an opportunity to demonstrate leadership, while 71.6% thought the position would allow them greater ability to affect change. Creating equitable and inclusive schools motivated 54.2% of vice-principals to pursue the role, while 52.4% wanted the increased responsibilities that come with involvement in administrative roles. A total of 71.2% of the sample were motivated to pursue a career as a vice-principal because they had been encouraged to apply for the position. Our qualitative data analysis indicates that vice-principals' work expectations

do not align with their reality. Two possible explanations for this misalignment are the effects of work intensification and role ambiguity.

### *Influence of work intensification*

Work intensification is understood to exist when a workforce continually experiences a combination of practices over a prolonged period that include long work hours, increased usual work, additional new work added to workload and increased pace of work. According to our findings, work intensification is impacting vice-principals. Numerous qualitative responses echoed this sentiment. The survey revealed that, on average, vice-principals reported working 54.5 hours per week, with 97.3% of the sample consistently working more than the standard 40 hours.

More than 60.8% of survey participants felt pressured to work long hours. In addition, 78.5% of the vice-principals indicated that they never seem to have enough time to do their work, and 44% agreed that the pace of their work is too fast. Moreover, only 52% felt they have the resources necessary to do their job properly. Vice-principals also indicated that their workload increases as issues around student and staff well-being become more complex. For example, they now have to deal with cyberbullying with emerging anonymous apps such as Yik Yak (Dewey, 2014).

Some of this work intensification may also be the result of principals' work intensification, which was determined in a similar 2014 survey (Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2015, 2014). Because principals are experiencing extensive work intensification, they may be prioritizing their work and delegating additional administrative tasks to the vice-principal in a practice known as *downloading of work demands*. The unintended consequence of this practice is the intensification of vice-principals' work. It is highly probable that this downloading is reducing the prevalence of instructional leadership practices for vice-principals.

### *Role ambiguity*

Principals can download work demands because the duties and responsibilities of the vice-principal are not well-defined and often negotiated with the principal (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990; Armstrong, 2006, 2009; Kwan, 2009; Williamson & Scott, 2012; Lim, 2016). For this reason, the actual daily work of vice-principals can vary greatly depending on the principal. Vice-principals who have a positive working relationship with their principal

may have very different work experiences as opposed to someone who does not have a productive working relationship with their principal.

## WHAT DO THESE INSIGHTS MEAN?

Understanding the prevalence – or lack thereof – of instructional leadership in the vice-principal role has implications for policy makers, professional associations, district school boards and institutions and organizations that provide professional development. These insights can potentially inform how the vice-principal role is structured, the content of professional learning and how professional learning is delivered.

### Structural changes

If policy-makers, such as the provincial government and district school boards, want vice-principals to concentrate more on instructional leadership, then they need to make structural changes that reduce some of the administrative paperwork to allow vice-principals the time to engage in instructional leadership practices.

If there is no political will to make structural alterations that shift the emphasis of vice-principals' away from discipline and administrative tasks, then the ministry, district school boards, principals and professional associations need to be clear and explicit about what the vice-principal role includes, so that those aspiring to the position will have a better sense of what to expect.

If aspiring vice-principals had more realistic expectations, they could likely increase their success and job satisfaction. We also recommend modifying professional learning opportunities to accurately reflect the work of vice-principals.

### Appropriate professional learning

Vice-principals in this study clearly indicated that they had unique work concentrations.

Many expressed wanting access to dedicated professional learning opportunities specific to their role. This alludes to a larger, structure issue in training for school leaders. The vice-principalship is considered a transitional step on the way to the principalship. But there is little training for the vice-principalship in and of itself. We highly recommend that professional associations such as the Ontario Principals' Council and other organizations that provide professional learning build upon and expand the existing Principal Qualification Programs to respond to vice-principals' unique work

tasks and challenges – specifically, implementing a Vice-Principal Qualification Program (VPQP) would likely prove beneficial.

### Vice-principal mentoring

There is ample debate about whether the vice-principal role adequately prepares individuals for the principal role. In some jurisdictions, principals mentor vice-principals to prepare them for a future principalship; few programs, however, mentor teachers, other administrators and novice vice-principals to prepare them for the vice-principalship. For those vice-principals who do connect with other vice-principals, it appears to be useful.

Some vice-principals use mentoring groups to support each other. However, it is not always easy for vice-principals to connect.

To promote vice-principal success, we recommend that the education community consider mentoring initiatives and structures that allow effective vice-principals to mentor new vice-principals.

## CONCLUSION

Our preliminary analysis of the 2016 online survey indicates that vice-principals' work includes more than being an instructional leader; for many vice-principals, it includes some sort of teaching assignment, considerable amounts of time and effort dealing with student discipline and managerial tasks, as well supporting students. Our findings confirm that vice-principals want to be more involved as instructional leaders; however, the actual work they engage in does not always reflect this role expectation. We have presented two reasons for this misalignment: work intensification and role ambiguity. The misalignment perpetuates an ongoing tension within the vice-principal position. One way to reduce this tension is to change the structure of the position or, at the very least, be clear about the work involved in being a vice-principal. The organizations and institutions that support vice-principals also need to ensure that vice-principals receive professional learning that accurately supports their present work context. Lastly, we hope this study can act as a starting point or baseline for continued investigation into the work of vice-principals to support them in the important work they do. ▲

For a full copy of the research report, please visit <http://www.edu.uwo.ca/faculty-profiles/docs/other/pollock/pollock-opc-vp-report-final.pdf>

Dr. Katina Pollock, Associate Professor, Western University

✉ [katina.pollock@uwo.ca](mailto:katina.pollock@uwo.ca)

Dr. Fei Wang, Assistant Professor, UBC

Cameron Hauseman, Doctoral Candidate, OISE/UT

### FACT

On average, vice-principals work

**54.5**

hours per week, with 97.3% of the sample consistently working more than the standard

40 hours.

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# Leading Mentally Healthy Schools

By  
Gail Lalonde  
Tracy Lindstrom  
Glen Woodburn

What principals need to know

Illustration by  
Sébastien Thibault

As school administrators, we play a critical role in delivering supports for students with mental health needs, and enhancing well-being for all students and staff. The challenge for principals and vice-principals is integrating these supports and practices into school processes, and developing an understanding of the attributes reflective of a mentally healthy school. The release of *Leading Mentally Healthy Schools: A Resource for School Administrators (LMHS, 2013)*, highlights these attributes by providing a foundation for basic mental health literacy and support for creating the conditions that promote student mental health and well-being ([https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B27pOh2aal\\_gZHplUI81S1BQOE0](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B27pOh2aal_gZHplUI81S1BQOE0)). With competing demands on our time, and multiple roles and expectations placed upon us, creating these environments can often feel like an overwhelming and daunting task.



Although administrators are not expected to be mental health professionals, we still have an important role to play in supporting staff and students, especially vulnerable ones. How we prepare ourselves and lead our staff in supporting students experiencing mental health challenges can make a significant difference. The vision for student mental health in Ontario is, *students who are flourishing, with a strong sense of belonging at school; with skills for managing academic and social emotional challenges; surrounded by caring adults and communities equipped to identify and intervene early when students struggle with mental health problems* (LMHS, 2013).

In recent years, the education system has seen increased recognition of the importance of student mental health and well-being and its intrinsic link to learning. In 2011, as part of the Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, the Ministry of Education funded the creation of School Mental Health ASSIST, an implementation support team. SMH-ASSIST provides support to school boards and board mental health leaders through a focus on leadership and organizational conditions to support effective school mental health, capacity through the creation of resource and identification of evidence-based mental health prevention/promotion programming. *Leading Mentally Healthy Schools* is one resource created through SMH-ASSIST by principals, mental health professionals and ministry staff to support school administrators. It is part of a collection of resources that can be found at <http://smh-assist.ca>

With the release of the *Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario: Achieving Excellence* (2014), a

new goal, promoting well-being, was added to further support the development of our students to enhance their mental and physical health, to develop a positive sense of self and belonging and to develop an ability to make positive choices. “Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping students become more resilient, so that they can make positive, healthy choices to support learning and achievement, now and in the future.” (*Achieving Excellence*, 2014, p.3) “Schools are an optimal setting to reduce stigma, promote positive mental health, build student social-emotional learning skills, prevent the development of mental health problems in high risk groups, identify students in need, and support students and their families in accessing services within our local communities.” (LMHS, 2013, p.13).

Essential to the development of mentally healthy school environments is mutual support and stewardship between administrators. In what can often feel like an isolated role, supportive relationships are key to grounding us in the critical work that we do. Stewardship is a way to work together to ensure the well-being of everyone in our care. This is an immense responsibility that requires that we not only provide support to our students and staff, but also support one another and ourselves. Stemming from the work of Dr. Kathy Short, director of SMH-ASSIST, and her team, a group of administrators and mental health leads from across the province came together in stewardship to support principals in leading mentally healthy schools.

As leaders, we create the conditions for promoting student well-being through a multi-tiered

In any given year, in an average classroom, there may be **5-7 students** who will struggle with their mental health to the degree that it will interfere with their academic performance. (LMHS, 2013, p.15)

system of support. Through our own day-to-day leadership action, we model for students and staff how to create caring classroom environments where students learn academically while they grow in character and confidence. In addition, it is important to consider the conditions and strategies that may increase your own sense of well-being, because evidence suggests when we model how we nurture ourselves, we teach our students how to care for themselves.

#### **Student Mental Health and Well-Being: Nurturing a Positive Sense of Self, Spirit and Belonging**

Positive mental health and well-being is a key component of healthy development and success at school. Research supports that students with good mental health, who are socially connected and resilient, have a better chance of reaching their full potential and achieving academic success. Building positive mental health is foundational to supporting student achievement and developing a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging.

Central to this approach is the belief that the best strategy to support student well-being is a proactive one. Schools have an important role to play in the promotion of well-being, prevention of student mental health concerns and early intervention with those students who may be struggling. Staff are integral in nurturing the skills, attitudes, knowledge and habits that promote positive mental health, identifying signs of difficulty for students with social/emotional needs, and supporting students to, from and through mental health care when necessary (Short, 2016).

*The Aligned and Integrated Model (AIM) for School Mental Health and Well-Being*, (SMH-ASSIST, 2016) highlights the five core elements schools can use to promote mental health among students:

How do we instill **“intrinsic motivation”** in those children whose relationships did not provide them with the skills and attributes that allow for it? We create environments that teach them: competence, autonomy and relatedness ... so that ALL students can say ...

“I belong here. My ability and competence grow with effort, I can and will succeed and this work has value for me.”

We are human developers.

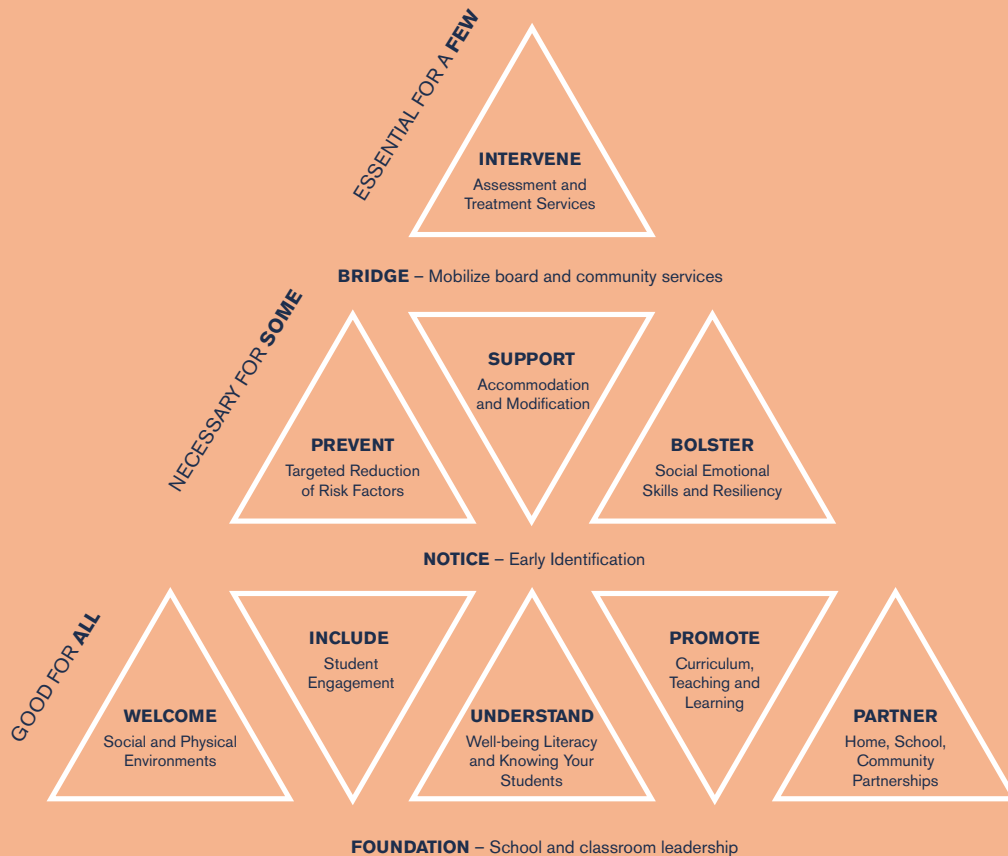
—DR. BRUCE FERGUSON, 2016



## Aligned and Integration Model (AIM)

FOR

School Mental Health and Well-Being



**WELCOME** – Welcoming and accepting school environments inspire a sense of belonging and help nurture a student’s identity within a larger community.

**INCLUDE** – Students need to be engaged in the process and have their voice included.

**UNDERSTAND** – Caring adults at school can learn how to notice students who may be struggling with mental health.

**PROMOTE** – At school, students can learn the skills, attitudes, knowledge and habits that build their personal resilience.

**PARTNER** – By guiding them through clear pathways to care, school personnel

can help families with mental health assessments and treatment services.

**For further information, visit [www.smh-assist.ca](http://www.smh-assist.ca).**

Multiple factors have been shown to enhance student well-being and engagement at school. One of the core contributing elements is the relationship that exists among administrator, educator and student. Relationships are critical – students learn through our actions and how we treat them. When administrators and teachers build positive relationships with students, have a supportive presence and take the time to develop rapport and trust, all students benefit. Students have reported that having someone who believes in them makes a tremendous difference in how they perform academically and how they feel about themselves.

Think about the teachers, principals and staff members that you remember having made a positive difference in your life. At the heart of it, **we are in the business of human development**; helping students discover their strengths, build skills and find their path. We need to know our students, show we care and inspire hope.

Central to the development of healthy, supportive relationships are social-emotional skills. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and decision-making skills (<http://www.casel.org/>). Research shows that when explicitly taught social-emotional learning skills, students not only show improvement in their emotions and behaviour, but also demonstrate impressive academic gains.

Administrators are well positioned not only to model positive relationships with staff, students and families, but to develop a positive school climate that promotes inclusion, safety and well-being. Schools are challenged to promote equitable, inclusive and accepting school climates and to ensure all students develop enhanced mental and physical health and a positive sense of self and belonging. It is about delivering high quality instruction in ways that promote a culture that understands the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) literacy, attitude or mindset, and establishment of habits that build resiliency and well-being. Research shows that providing this caring context, improves academic achievement, resiliency and well-being (Durlak et al, 2011). Little things make a big difference; greeting each student as they enter the building, smiling when you pass students in the hall, celebrating diversity in visible ways, catching and recognizing kindness, having a high

“**SEL** represents a fortuitous opportunity to prepare students for the workforce and help close academic achievement gaps, while simultaneously addressing the learning needs of each and every child.”

– **Social and Emotional Learning: Opportunities for Massachusetts, Lessons for the Nation, p.3**



### Positive school environments can be facilitated through

- acceptance and understanding of student mental health needs
- stigma reduction
- a focus on resiliency, understanding and encouraging protective factors
- promoting positive youth development
- recognizing diversity
- highlighting mental fitness
- encouraging a sense of connectedness
- providing social emotional learning.



### What do ALL students need at school?

- A warm welcome
- A smile
- A connection to a caring adult, every day
- A chance to learn
- A safe place to risk
- Someone who notices when something is wrong
- Someone who listens and tries to find help for them
- Someone who believes in them, and instills hope.

SMH-ASSIST



### Know the signs to recognize the signs

Is a student struggling with a mental health concern? Watch for changes in performance or behaviour and *consider*:

- frequency
- duration
- intensity
- appropriateness for the student's age and stage
- interference with the student's life.

### HIGH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY...



INCREASES	DECREASES
high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary completion, employment rates, and average wages.	dropout rates, school and classroom behaviour issues, drug use, teen pregnancy, mental health problems and criminal behaviour.



Social, Emotional and Academic Development: Fast Facts, 2016, p. 2

In 2011, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, identified that, "**Mental health is the number one issue** in schools today as identified by our teachers, principals, superintendents, directors of education and trustees."



expectation for all. Be curious about every student and find their most positive qualities.

Many administrators have expressed concerns over the prevalence of students experiencing difficulties with anxiety and depression. Understand the signs of common mental health and addiction problems. Know your students. Consult *Supporting Minds, Ministry of Education*, (2013).

Educators are well-positioned to help inspire purpose, hope, belonging and meaning. You play an important role in supporting students experiencing mental health challenges. When we are connected to students and have strong relationships, we are better able to recognize changes in mood and behaviour. Connectedness is the sense of caring for others and being cared for. It is one of the most powerful protective factors in mental health, and is central to creating mentally healthy schools. There are four essential components to developing connectedness

- relationships
- belonging
- being included and
- being engaged.

– *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014).*

Regardless of our role, we are all in this together. Administrators need not feel alone in creating and enhancing healthy school climates, nor in supporting student mental health and well-being. Over the past year, a group of principals and mental health leads passionate about creating the conditions for mentally healthy schools and supporting student mental health have worked collaboratively with School Mental Health ASSIST, ADFO, CPCO and the OPC to create a series of resources to supplement/compliment the LMHS document. These resources are available through the SMH-ASSIST website at: <https://smh-assist.ca/resources/?tag=328>, or by speaking with your board Mental Health Leader. ▲

Gail Lalonde is the Mental Health Lead with the Thames Valley DSB  
✉ [g.lalonde@tvdsb.on.ca](mailto:g.lalonde@tvdsb.on.ca)

Tracy Lindstrom is the Vice-Principal of Teaching and Learning with the Keewatin-Patricia DSB  
✉ [t.lindstrom@kpdsb.on.ca](mailto:t.lindstrom@kpdsb.on.ca)

Glen Woodburn is the Principal of Glendale High School with the Thames Valley DSB  
✉ [g.woodburn@tvdsb.on.ca](mailto:g.woodburn@tvdsb.on.ca)

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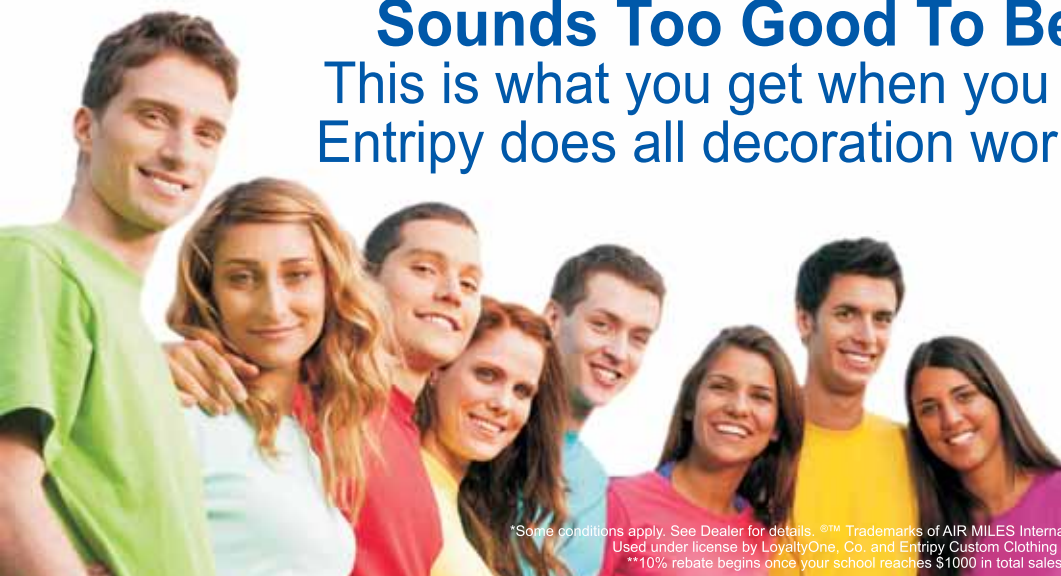
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PROUDLY CANADIAN



REACHING

# YOUNG MEN



ING

**Kids Help Phone is targeting support for teen boys**

By Melanie Simons

| Director, Marketing, Communications  
and Community Engagement

By Kristen Buckley

| Senior Manager, Information Referral  
and Knowledge Mobilization

Photography by Kids Help Phone



Teen boys are less likely to reach out for help when they need it. Counselors at Kids Help Phone, Canada's 24/7 free counselling service for young people, experience first-hand what's been shown in counselling research literature: male and male-identifying teens are influenced by gender roles and social pressure when it comes to asking for help. The organization has been working to close that gender gap, and offer the services and information teen boys say they need most to help address their challenges, wherever they are, and over the communications technologies they use.

"Not only have I experienced male adolescents disclose feeling shame or guilt simply for reaching out for help, I have also heard male youths share that they feel only certain emotions are considered acceptable for them to experience," says Rebecca\*, a front-line counsellor at Kids Help Phone.

"When they do decide to share what they're going through, they struggle to express their feelings," she adds. "The challenges of having to over-

come societal pressure and personal discomfort means that male youths are met with additional hurdles when seeking mental health support."

The teen boys Rebecca counsels often want to talk about feelings of loneliness, difficulties managing emotions of anger, frustration resulting from relationship conflict and experiences of depressive behaviours.

She also says when teen boys talk about loneliness, they are more likely to speak about a lack of connection or meaningful support, while girls are more likely to talk about a lack of trust. When male teens talk about depression, she says it's usually at the point when it's affecting their daily activities; for instance, when they notice they're procrastinating from responsibilities or losing interest in hobbies.

Teen boys also look to Kids Help Phone for information on fitting in, bullying, substance abuse, sexual orientation, gender identity, suicide, self-injury and sadness.

#### **Why mental health support and counselling make a difference**

Learning resiliency is a good way for children and young people to prepare for difficult situations and challenging life transitions. The start of a new school term, exam time and applica-

**... when teen boys talk about loneliness, they are more likely to speak about a lack of connection or meaningful support, while girls are more likely to talk about a lack of trust.**

tion deadlines for postsecondary education are all examples of day-to-day stressors young people face, and that's just at school.

Everyone, at some time or another, can use a good talk, a listening ear and some helpful advice from a trained and experienced counsellor.

"By reaching out for help to begin building support networks, develop stress management strategies and test problem-solving skills before being weighed down by a difficult situation, youth can have a greater chance at weathering storms when they come," says Rebecca.

When a young person gets the support they need, when they need it, they are more likely to get through a difficult situation or challenge and learn from it. They don't have to cope alone. That can mean a greater chance of overall well-being and mental health.

Some youth may develop mental health issues – in fact, research shows 70 per cent of

mental health challenges begin in childhood and adolescence, and early interventions in these cases can lessen, or even prevent, their development.

Evaluation shows that young people who speak with Kids Help Phone counsellors are overwhelmingly satisfied with their counselling experience. Ninety-eight per cent of young people who reached out by phone said they would call Kids Help Phone again if they need help.

There are also young people who, when faced with life challenges, stressors and tough decisions, may be at risk for substance abuse, self-harm and suicide. Statistically, Kids Help Phone counselling has proven to make significant change in five crucial clinical indicators: reductions in distress; increases in clarity about their problem and increases in their awareness of options or strategies for dealing with it; increases in hope; and increases in confidence in their ability to overcome their challenges.

Children and youth who are supported can be treated for early signs of mental health challenges, and they may choose not to turn to harmful behaviours such as substance abuse, bullying or self-harm.

#### **What Kids Help Phone learned from talking to teen boys**

Canadian mental health statistics for teen boys are alarming: they engage in high-risk behaviours and die by suicide at a higher rate than young women. In October 2015, Kids Help Phone decided to look more closely at how best to support male and male-identifying youth and launched a new initiative, called BroTalk, to raise awareness, and also to gather feedback from young men. BroTalk was made possible with the support of the Movember Foundation and informed by partnerships with Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and Canadian Red Cross Respect Education.

Kids Help Phone conducted nation-wide research as part of BroTalk, hosting 21 moderated focus groups with teen boys in both urban and rural areas in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. Kids Help Phone also gathered data from experts from 10 leading organizations. Altogether there were 157 participants.

Kids Help Phone wanted to give teen boys a say and use that information to shape solu-

tions and services in the future. The overall findings from the focus groups backed up the research:

- Boys don't typically get much validation of their feelings: "I think people are afraid of being told that how they're feeling isn't really how they're feeling."
- Boys don't think they are allowed to feel very much at all: "We're more taught ... you're a guy, suck it up, you're tough."
- Boys sublimate their feelings into actions: "Sports. Working out. Channel my anger through that."
- Young men have a really hard time trusting other people with their emotions: "That's important. Get to know them, trust them more."

"BroTalk enabled us to strengthen our understanding of the barriers that make teen males less likely to reach out for support," said Melanie Simons, Kids Help Phone Director, Marketing, Communications and Community Engagement. "We learned guys are willing to reach out, but want a safe, convenient and fast way to do so. They also want to know that they are coming to a safe place that's free of judgment."

Kids Help Phone addressed the need for a more direct path in its 2017 website redesign, making it easier and faster to click and get access to help from every page. Through focus groups and surveys, the charity learned that guys were coming to the site for information on puberty, sex, dating, family-related concerns, bullying and real life stories. Many wanted to know firsthand that other boys were experiencing similar challenges. All of this information is readily accessible on the redesigned, mobile-optimized website.

Kids Help Phone also integrated its findings from BroTalk into its existing counselling services, its approach to male mental health issues and new initiatives. "Kids Help Phone's trained counsellors are now better equipped to speak and connect in a way that is best suited to all males, and are better at breaking down some of the stereotypical barriers that some young men face when they reach out for help," noted Alisa Simon, Kids Help Phone's Vice-President of Counselling Services and Programs.

**70 %**  
**of mental health challenges begin in childhood and adolescence, and early interventions in these cases can lessen, or even prevent, their development.**

#### **How Kids Help Phone supports young people**

Kids Help Phone is a charity providing Canada's only national 24-hour, bilingual and anonymous counselling and referral service for children and youth. Each year, over 63,000 young people from across the country connect with a Kids Help Phone counsellor for support and information by phone, with online chat or by going to the charity's website.

KidsHelpPhone.ca offers extensive information, interactive games, video and other content on topics like emotional well-being, bodies, bullying and abuse, identity, sex and relationships, school and work and friends and family. They can also read real questions from young people answered by Kids Help Phone's professional counsellors.

The charity's counselling model includes solution, narrative and crisis counselling. With a focus on single session counselling, young people can connect with the service by phone, Live Chat via the website or by downloading the Always There chat app on their smartphones.

Because Kids Help Phone is committed to meeting young people where they are, the charity works to continually adapt to the communication technologies young people use. "Our mobile-responsive website focuses on a user-centred search where young people can directly connect to our phone line, Live Chat service, Resources Around Me and any other information," says Simon.

Counselling services via text messaging are also on the horizon. "As our charity continues to bring new solutions to critical problems facing young people, we are looking to launch

## **Kids Help Phone’s trained counsellors are now better equipped to speak and connect in a way that is best suited to all males ...**

a texting service trial in 2017 in the province of Manitoba,” she continued.

At Kids Help Phone, trained staff work to make every counselling session and interaction meaningful. Counsellor Rebecca explains that, “One way of doing this is by demonstrating a willingness to experience uncomfortable feelings and showing a variety of ways to manage these feelings.”

She highlights as an example a counselling session where she had asked a question that was unclear, and in clearing up the miscommunication immediately asked the young man to help her understand her mistake. “The young man was initially surprised to experience such openness in conversation and then discussed his desire to experience that level of openness in his own interaction with others.”

### **How Kids Help Phone can help at your school**

In addition to our counselling services, young people can access Kid Help Phone through our youth engagement programming, which offers opportunities for students to build skills, develop relationships with their peers and school staff and explore topics they are passionate about.

As a national charity, Kids Help Phone connects young people to credible services and resources in their community, including sexual health clinics, shelters, LGBTQ support, Indigenous support, legal support and counselling services.

Kids Help Phone provides resources schools can use to promote mental health and access to counselling services. Reach out to Kids Help Phone for materials that include

- Marketing materials such as posters (for classrooms, hallways and offices)
- Wallet cards with Kids Help Phone contact information
- Good2Talk, a post-secondary student helpline in Ontario
- A school clubs program for young people to help raise awareness in their school
- A National Youth Council that recruits youth from across Canada to participate in strategic discussions at Kids Help Phone and
- Fundraising events and school fundraising initiatives.

“Our vision is a future where every young person in Canada will access the support they need, in the way they need it most,” says Simons. “We are always open, providing a safe and trusted place for young people in any moment of crisis or need.”

### **How to contact Kids Help Phone**

Find out more about Kids Help Phone and the resources available to you and your school at [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca). Once on the site you can order materials or connect to regional information pages from links on the Contact page.

If a young person at your school is seeking mental health and well-being information and support, you can direct them to call 1-800-668-6868 or visit [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca). ▲

✉ [Contact@KidsHelpPhone.ca](mailto:Contact@KidsHelpPhone.ca)

*\*Name changed for confidentiality*

## **Male teen mental health: what principals and educators should know**

- Teen boys are less likely to reach out for help when they need it
- Teen boys engage in high-risk behaviours and die by suicide more often than young women
- 70% of mental health disorders begin at an early age, and early interventions can make a difference
- Young men don't always get much validation of their feelings
- All teens need to know it's okay to talk about what's troubling them
- All young people in Canada have free, 24/7 support through Kids Help Phone
- Kids Help Phone provides a safe, private and trusted place for young people to access the support they need, from counsellors who are there to listen without judgment
- Kids Help Phone provides counselling by phone, Live Chat, and will soon be launching a text-based support service
- [KidsHelpPhone.ca](http://KidsHelpPhone.ca) provides valuable free resources for educators, parents and young people
- Kids, teens and young adults can talk to a trained counsellor at 1-800-668-6868 or via the online chat accessible at [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca) from wherever they are, and whenever they need it

# Engaging the Principals of Tomorrow

## The OPC's NEW Emerging Leader Development Program

One of the great privileges of being a principal is to seek out, support and guide leaders in our schools who will one day work alongside us as colleagues.

### Who should we be tapping on the shoulder?

This is a very important question to ask because we want to ensure that the people we are 'tapping on the shoulder' have the potential to be great principals. Simon Sinek's very first words in his book *Start With Why* (2009), read as follows, "There are leaders and there are those who lead. Leaders hold a position of power or influence. Those who lead inspire us." Sinek (2009) states that leading is not about power, but rather about one's capacity to inspire. Leadership is a behaviour, not a position. Leithwood (2012), indicates that principals have an "enormous range of responsibilities but very constrained positional power" (p. 48). To meet these challenges, emerging leaders must be able to demonstrate personal leadership resources, such as the ability to find common ground and create a shared purpose to ensure the goals and priorities of the school can be met. The people we encourage should be demonstrating the capacity to inspire and, as such, contribute to the achievement of our schools' vision and goals.

### How can principals and vice-principals support emerging leaders?

The inaugural issue of the Leadership for Learning series entitled *The Aspiring Principal/Vice-Principal*, offers "first-



hand" experiences for emerging leaders

- leading school-wide projects
- taking on the role of "teacher-in-charge" for a day
- mentoring new teachers in the role
- acting as a resource to others and
- engaging with data to inform student achievement and instruction (p. 3-4).

Providing opportunities such as these enable emergent leaders to experience the pivotal role principals play in improving student achievement and well-being, and open the doorway for continued dialogue about the role, its realities and its rewards.

### What are the next steps for emerging leaders?

It is critical that emerging leaders see leadership as a journey and not a destination. "The fact is that learning to lead is a fluid, dynamic and evolving process" (*The Aspiring Principal/Vice-Principal*, 2016/17 p. 6). In support of this, the

OPC is offering a new Emerging Leader Development Program. The program offers the following online courses to help emerging leaders determine the skills and knowledge they need to be effective principals:

- Discovering Your Leadership Stance and the Role of the School Administrator
- Exploring the Legal Duties of School Administrators
- What is Pedagogical Leadership?
- Exploring Your Equity Stance
- Strategies to Support Challenging Conversations
- Mental Health Issues that Leaders are Confronted with Everyday.

Supporting and encouraging emerging leaders is a critical part of ensuring that our schools thrive and students grow in healthy, productive environments. ▲

✉ [elc@principals.ca](mailto:elc@principals.ca)



**REFERENCES:**  
 Leithwood, K. (2012). *The Ontario Leadership Framework 2012: with a Discussion of the Research Foundations*. Toronto: The Institute for Education Leadership. As of March, 2012.  
 Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York: Penguin Group.  
 Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016/17). *Leadership for Learning: A Resource for School and System Leaders Issue No. 1. The Aspiring Principal/Vice-Principal*. Toronto. As of July 26, 2017 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership>

# Mark Your Calendar

## Health and Well-being Program for School Leaders

Registration Deadline:

**December 15, 2017**

January 8 – September 2018

Online Program

## OPC 20th Anniversary Forum

#LeadON20

Early Bird Registration:

**December 22, 2017**

April 18 – 19, 2018

Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel

## New Administrator Seminar

Registration Deadline:

**February 9, 2018**

February 20 – 21, 2018

Toronto Airport Marriott Hotel

For more information on the events and courses listed, visit [www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca) or email [elc@principals.ca](mailto:elc@principals.ca)

# Just Kidding!



## OPC Staff Contacts

### President

Mary Linton  
[president@principals.ca](mailto:president@principals.ca)

### Communications

Peggy Sweeney  
[psweeney@principals.ca](mailto:psweeney@principals.ca)

### General Inquiry

[admin@principals.ca](mailto:admin@principals.ca)

### Education

Leadership Canada  
[elc@principals.ca](mailto:elc@principals.ca)

### Executive Director

Allyson Otten  
[aotten@principals.ca](mailto:aotten@principals.ca)

### Protective Services

Aditi Sayed  
[asayed@principals.ca](mailto:asayed@principals.ca)

### Membership Services

[membership@principals.ca](mailto:membership@principals.ca)



## Additional Qualification Programs

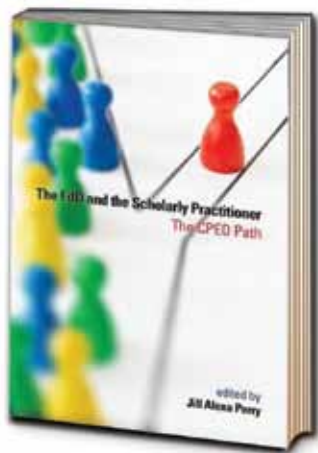
offered by the Ontario Principals' Council



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- Mentoring Qualification Program (MQP)
- Principal's Development Course (PDC)
- Principal's Qualification Program (PQP)
- Special Education for Administrators (SEA)
- Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program (SOQP)

[www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca)





## The EdD and the Scholarly Practitioner: The CPED Path

Edited by Jill Alexa Perry

Information Age Publishing, Inc. 2016

ISBN: 9781681235417, \$73.09

Reviewed by Nicole Miller

**T**he *EdD and the Scholarly Practitioner* is a collection of articles journaling the redesign of many Education Doctorate (EdD) programs across three countries, using a framework designed by the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). Spearheaded in 2007 to create a new, more relevant and responsive program, it sought to rethink the implementation, course content, dissertation options and outcomes of this degree (Perry, 2016, p.2). There were a number of key reasons articulated for this redesign including: improving rigor and responsiveness, refining elements of an EdD, distinguishing it from a PhD program, improving credibility and networking options and responding to calls for a practical program for institutional change in education.

There was a desire to design programming so that students could be confident their EdD was “more than just a credential and (that it would) support their development in the use of inquiry and scholarship as a tool for impacting practice” (Perry, 2016, p.18). This was a direct response to a variety of student complaints that the EdD was too theoretical, too impractical and lacked prestige. Some colleges had, in fact, stopped offering it altogether (Perry, 2016).

Perry identifies the volume as one that offers school faculty interested in “changing their EdD programs a unique look into how CPED’s flexible framework for program design can be implemented in different contexts” (Perry, 2016, p.vii). It is also a valuable tool for potential and current EdD students to ensure they advocate for and use their selected program to maximize its impact to improve their own practice in the workplace.

The volume is organized into three distinct but interconnected sections. Articles around the impetus for change and the impact of additional focus on meaningful practicality into the EdD program comprise the first section. In the next section, CPED-consortium members and faculty discuss the benefits of, and challenges to, the changes of their program. Finally, section three is a collection of individual reflections by students who have graduated from CPED-influenced programs. This third section is by far the most engaging for the administrator interested in pursuing the degree as it is a clear and engaging look at the things that can be accomplished with a supportive program.

As a newly enrolled EdD student at OISE/UT, and confronted with what Labaree (2003) calls the “jarring discontinuity” of school or district-based educa-

tional practice, this book provided a way for me to explore the EdD as more than a traditional research degree. Instead, it frames a way to think about this undertaking as an opportunity, through deeper learning and questioning, to broaden and strengthen leadership skills for school or district-based practitioners. Indeed, Flessa (2007) reminds us that

“ongoing debate and struggle about our purposes and roles in professional preparation are not bothersome additions to our work but instead the very foundation of it; articulating why we should be entrusted to continue to prepare teachers, leaders and scholars is not something to be gotten out of the way so that we can do our jobs; it is the job itself” (p. 207).

Perry has compiled this book from the position that embraces the EdD redesign and avoids the larger question to come out of these debates about whether these terminal degrees in education ought to exist at all. Her work posits the degree has value and requires an effective, professional, rigorous and dynamic framework. ▲

Nicole Miller is an EdD Student (OISE/UT) and the principal at Bliss Carman Sr. PS (Toronto District School Board)

✉ nicole.miller@tdsb.on.ca

### i

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Flessa, J. (2007). *The trouble with the EdD. Leadership and Policy in schools*, 6, 197-208.  
Perry, J.A. (Ed.) (2016). *The EdD and the scholarly practitioner: The CPED path*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.



## Qualitative or Quantitative?

What the data will tell us about our students

*Educators are consistently developing and evaluating ideas, collaboratively considering input from all stakeholders to create a repertoire of differentiated strategies for student achievement. We believe in methodology that is inquiry-based*

and involves higher-level critical thinking to develop our students as the positive problem-solvers of tomorrow, using an inclusive and cross-curricular vision. Students are the pivotal reason for the collection of academic data and the integration of fresh ideas in our pedagogy.

Data is at the forefront of our decision making, as we make informed interventions for our students to propel them forward. The question that is intriguing is whether the quantitative data we collect provides sufficient perspective. Students who require an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) have their strengths and weaknesses formally listed using a mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative data. Knowing all the unique nuances of a student enables educators to collectively implement this working document. Here lies the question. Why are we only providing quantitative data in a child's Ontario Student Record (OSR) unless they have an IEP? Where are we

able to formally include the nuances of qualitative data that provide a more thorough description of every child for analysis and intervention? The few lines of text provided in a ministry report card are insufficient for incorporating the comprehensive triangulation of data required by Growing Success (2008).

Including more qualitative data provides an enhanced personalized synopsis of the whole student. What about the student without an IEP who requires breakfast, a break or some time to talk before they can proceed and focus on learning? Where can this qualitative data be recorded so that it is passed along to the next educator who embarks on the student's path of academic success? How can report card areas for text be expanded so that there is balance between the quantitative and qualitative data that is collected? How can we include all the nuances of the child, their background, their family, their personal circumstances and their hopes

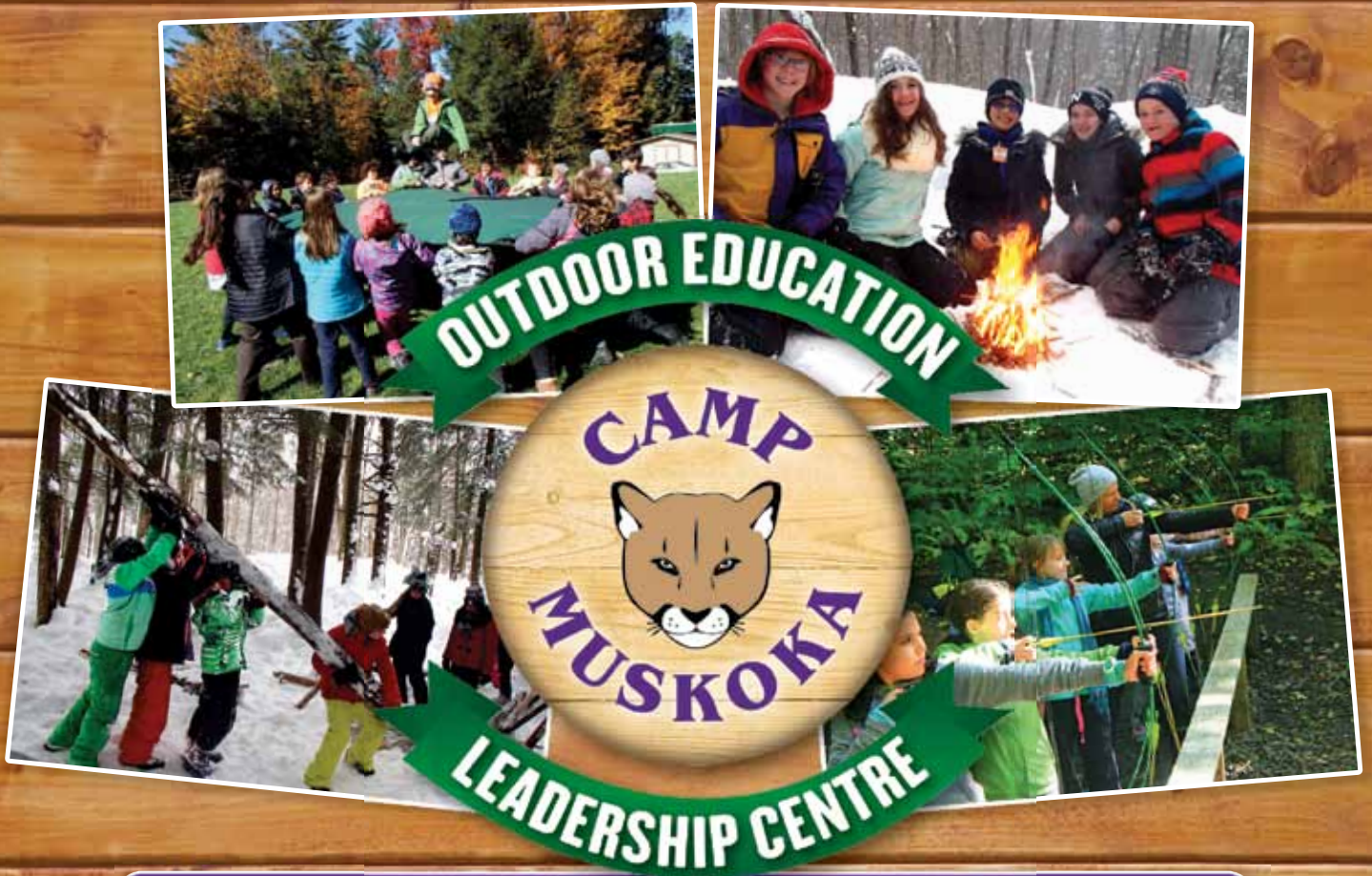
and dreams to provide a more thorough description of the whole child? Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy (1943) overshadows the work we do unless all student needs are addressed. We intervene as nurses, social workers and facilitators to help both students and families with a never-ending variety of challenges. It would be advantageous to create a larger formalized method for recording both types of student data in the OSR to address each child's unique needs.

Qualitative data is a vital component of who a student is and what they require so that they can focus on academics and move forward in their learning. Only including quantitative information in an OSR is insufficient, especially for our students who are more transient and the educators who are unfamiliar with them. Continuing to seek ways to provide a more balanced mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative feedback for the whole child in ministry reports will provide educators with missing information that is vital to student success, assisting and guiding our students to be the best they can be. ▲

Brenda Plowman is a vice-principal with the Greater Essex County District School Board. Brenda has published a Master's Thesis at the University of Windsor and an article for the Ontario Library Association.

✉ [brenda.plowman@publicboard.ca](mailto:brenda.plowman@publicboard.ca)

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