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OPC Register

THE MAGAZINE FOR ONTARIO'S PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS

Tackling Many Challenges

Minister Hunter puts her past successes to work in education



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Correction

In our Fall 2016 issue, we incorrectly identified the author of the One Last Thought submission as Mark Warren in his bio. The column was written by Warren Marks. We apologize for the error.

Collective Influence

Engaging members for action and change



Each year, school leaders engage in a complex process of completing strategic planning for student learning, achievement and well-being. Principals and vice-principals routinely lead collaborative activities involving teachers,

support staff and board staff to develop school improvement plans that meet the needs of the diverse learners in their school communities. Students and parents, through School Councils, are often involved in providing input and direction. These plans are reviewed, revised and continually referenced in order to chart progress toward differentiated goals, while maintaining alignment with system priorities. This is truly sophisticated leadership.

This year at the OPC, the Executive, Senior Staff and Provincial Council engaged in a similar strategic planning process to identify the big ideas, goals and actions that would form the focus of our intentions for the year. The plan also provides the opportunity to measure

progress throughout the year toward addressing these goals. Like school improvement planning, it is a dynamic process that will need to be responsive to issues as they develop to better serve Members' interests.

The three big ideas or areas of focus for the year include

- *Engagement* of Members, local executives and Councillors to build leadership capacity for representation and advocacy for the role of the school leader and for the organization
- *Relationship-building* to take advantage of our influence with government, partners, stakeholders and others to advocate, communicate and represent the significant impact of school

leadership on student well-being, learning and achievement in a mutually respectful and beneficial manner and

- *Informing and directing* the OPC on key issues.

These are not new practices or priorities for the OPC. The goal-setting exercise simply allows for clarification of intentions and provides direction for actions. For each of these three ideas, there are related goals and actions. A significant priority continues to be Member connection and engagement to our provincial organization. It is my hope that each Member understands our provincial association and feels empowered to represent the interests of principals and vice-principals in Ontario.

Member engagement can begin with individual and local level involvement. I encourage everyone to become familiar with their local executive by getting to know the Provincial Councillors, Local President/Chair and T & C Chairs. Attend local OPC events for professional learning, such as Hot Topics workshops. There are also additional learning opportunities offered in the weekly email from Education Leadership Canada (ELC), a branch of the OPC. Stay on top of provincial activities by reading the weekly President's Message. Local executives are also involved in planning a President's visit to the district. This is an important aspect of my role, giving me the opportunity to hear the stories and learn from colleagues across the province in order to better inform our provincial voice.

At the provincial level, there are several significant initiatives underway related to the big ideas. The development and implementation of a provincial Employee Life and Health Trust (ELHT) benefits plan continues to be a priority, as this is completely new territory for the OPC, and doing it well is so important. With the support of an experienced consultant and the involvement of leaders from our partner organizations CPCO and ADFO, there is a strong commitment to providing our Members with a plan that meets our diverse and unique needs.

Significant time and energy is also being spent on the Working Tables that were part of the June Terms and Conditions process. Through our Provincial Councillors, feedback was gathered to inform the representatives on the three working groups looking at Ministry Initiatives, Recruitment and Retention and Crisis Support. We remain optimistic that the provincial feedback will have influence, and that real change is possible for school administrators.

Your involvement in the OPC contributes to making individuals, locals and provincial practices more informed. We are a stronger organization because of this collective influence. ▲



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The Register is the proud recipient of the following awards:



Happenings at OPC ...



Mentor-Coaching Institute Facilitator Team meets at the OPC to review the enhancements to this program.



Authors Kate Sharpe (left) and Jeanie Nishimura (right) at the launch of their new book *When Mentoring Meets Coaching: Shifting the stance in education*.



Keynote speakers at our October Council meeting included Chris D'Souza, an equity expert (top) and Minister Mitzie Hunter (above).



Dr. Ken Leithwood, Professor Emeritus, OISE/UT, presents in Toronto at the 2016 LEAP Professional Learning Day on the topic of "Leadership Networks for Learning" to a group of 60 participants from Australia, New Zealand and Ontario.

Keynote speakers Dr. Karen Edge (below) and Dr. Katina Pollock (bottom) at the 2016 Third Annual International Symposium focusing on Global Trends for All Generations: Exploring work-life balance and well-being.



Learning and Leading

Supporting principal leadership in mathematics

“Research indicates that leadership for teaching and learning has a direct impact on student learning. Leadership is widely recognized as one of the most important factors in

teacher and student learning.” (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Knowing the impact that leadership has on student learning, principals and vice-principals from across the province were invited to participate in professional learning about mathematics leadership through a conference entitled “Supporting Principal Leadership in Mathematics” during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. These conferences were funded by the Ministry of Education and facilitated by the three principal organizations: OPC, CPCO and ADFO. The lead facilitator was Dr. Chris Suurtamm, a foremost expert in the area of mathematics from the University of Ottawa. She highlighted current research from around the world in terms of effective teaching and learning in the area of mathematics and engaged participants in activities that explored mathematical concepts and thinking tools.

Facilitators from the three principal groups worked with administrators to explore the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) from a mathematics lens. During the fall of 2016, conference participants were invited back to a follow-up, in which they learned again from Dr. Suurtamm and shared their own learnings and challenges in leading the mathematics learning at their schools.

As a result of participation in these institutes, administrators became knowl-

edgeable about research in the area of mathematics and implications for effective teaching and learning. Dr. Suurtamm shared current research from around the world and participants discussed this research in terms of classroom instruction and professional development.



Principals and vice-principals deepened their understanding of the mathematics curriculum document, looking at the overall and specific curriculum expectations. Participants investigated the verbs contained within specific expectations and discussed how to assess them in terms of observation, conversation and product.

Developing a Math Culture at both school and classroom levels was a productive topic of conversation. By participating in hands-on math activities and reflecting on what good teaching and learning in mathematics looks like, administrators saw the shift in culture that could happen in their schools. By the end of the three days, participants developed an action plan for their individual school.

Feedback surveys revealed an increase in administrator confidence and ability to facilitate professional learning in the area of mathematics. They also felt better prepared to plan and implement parent engagement activities in the area of mathematics at their schools.

Administrators participated in a Family Math Night, experiencing whole group introduction and small group activities. They observed organizational aspects and explored additional strategies and resources to engage parents in their children’s mathematical learning.

Administrators investigated their personal connections to the OLF in the area of mathematics, fueling future conversations around personal professional growth. Throughout the institute, participants referred to the leadership practices, self-reflected and consolidated their learnings into a cohesive and comprehensive plan for their schools.

Comments stated overwhelmingly that the ability to connect with and learn from colleagues across the province was one of the most powerful pieces of the Institute. Over the course of the three days, informal professional administrator networks were formulated through discussions, activities and sharing of personal journeys.

The ability to learn from a knowledgeable researcher and co-learn with colleagues made this Institute unique. Many administrators made connections that extended beyond the institute and continued to thrive over the next year. ▲

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i Photo: Conference participants sharpen their comprehension of the mathematics curriculum.



Human Rights Com

What you need to know

In Ontario, employers are required by law to provide work environments that are free from discrimination and harassment. As a society, we embrace these ideas and believe fundamentally that people have the right not to be subjected to prejudice or discrimination. Further to this end, most district school boards provide mandatory training each year for principals and vice-principals and have policies and procedures in place in an effort to ensure that schools are places where students and staff can expect to be treated in a respectful manner. Most boards will also have a robust internal investigation process for handling human rights complaints, especially where such complaints emanate from staff. In addition, unionized staff also have the option of grieving any conduct on the part of the employer or its representatives that they perceive as a violation of their human rights.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/KOKOUU

By Protective Services Team

plaints



What happens if I am named as a respondent in an HRTO complaint?

When dealing with HRTO issues initiated by parents, the typical response from the district school board will be to engage legal counsel to respond to the complaint on behalf of the board.



Despite these efforts and internal processes, from time to time principals and vice-principals may find themselves responding to an application to the Human Rights Tribunal from parents or staff. If this happens to you, you are advised to contact the Protective Services Team (PST) at the OPC, as well as your supervisory officer, so that we can assist you in this process. Most human rights applications will name the board as well as the principal and/or vice-principal, so the board will usually provide a legal defence on its own behalf and on behalf of its employees, for whom it's vicariously liable under the Human Rights Code.

What is the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO)?

The HRTO is the administrative tribunal responsible for resolving claims of discrimination and harassment brought under the *Human Rights Code*. Resolution can be reached through mediation or through adjudication.

HRTO decisions are made by adjudicators called vice-chairs, or members. HRTO adjudicators have experience, knowledge and training in human rights law and they have the authority to decide if discrimination has occurred and to order a remedy. Their hearings are like a trial – evidence will be called by the applicant and the respondents, there is examination and cross-examination of witnesses, the vice-chair will make procedural determinations throughout the process, and ultimately will issue a decision that is binding on the parties, subject only to an appeal.

What types of complaints can go forward to the Human Rights Tribunal?

The HRTO can only rule on complaints that fall under the Ontario Human Rights Code and are within its jurisdiction. The Code is a provincial law that gives everyone equal rights and protects people from discrimination and harassment in areas such as their workplace, receiving services and housing. The Code attempts to eliminate discrimination in 17 different areas including race, religion, gender and sexual orientation.

Complaints must forward within one year from the time the alleged discrimination occurred, or complainants risk having their complaint dismissed as untimely.

What happens if I am named as a respondent in an HRTO complaint?

When dealing with HRTO issues initiated by parents, the typical response from the district school board will be to engage legal counsel to respond to the complaint on behalf of the board. Provided that you have followed the appropriate policies and procedures of your board, you will likely receive a full defence. If the board perceives that you have violated its policies and procedures, and depending on the indemnification protections in your Terms and Conditions of Employment locally, it's possible that you will need to defend yourself. In that case, you should contact the OPC to request support from the Protective Services Team. Usually, though, the OPC and the board will cooperate and collaborate to ensure that the best possible defence is provided.

Once you have read through the complaint and the alleged incidents of discrimination, you need to go through your notes and gather all

information pertaining to the situation. In the case of a complaint brought forward by a parent on behalf of a student, it would be important to check through meeting notes, interview notes, communication logs and report card comments, and gather that documentation together to review. In addition, it would be important to identify key witnesses who would be in a position to comment on their observations surrounding the issues in question. You may be asked by your Superintendent to interview staff or students; or, someone else may be designated to do so. Follow the board's direction and comply with the instructions of legal counsel.

If you are named personally as a respondent, the board's legal counsel will often bring a motion to request that the HRTO remove you from the proceeding and proceed only against the district school board because you were acting on the board's behalf. Such requests are often, but not always, granted by the HRTO, depending on whether your conduct is at the heart of the allegations, or whether you were simply the conduit through which board policies were enacted. If personal malice or deliberate harassment is alleged, then the HRTO is less likely to remove the personal respondent from the proceeding.

When dealing with HRTO issues initiated by staff, it is important to review the internal human rights policies and procedures of your board. In these cases, especially where the board has yet to conduct an internal investigation to determine your culpability and its liability, principals and vice-principals need to contact the Protective Services Team, as you will need representation during the investigation. Often, however, HRTO applications are held in abeyance while internal or grievance proceedings are undertaken; therefore, if they proceed at all, they usually come well after internal investigations and determinations have taken place.

What type of process will I be expected to participate in?

Once a response to the allegations has been submitted in writing, the HRTO will provide it to the applicant for a reply. All documents are shared among the parties. In addition, the parties will need to consider participation in a mediation process. It is important to remember that participation has to be consensual; one party cannot force the other party to participate in this process. The goal of mediation is to bring a timely and mutually acceptable resolution to the complaint.

If mediation is not the chosen path, then a hearing date will be set.

A hearing is a much more formal process where an adjudicator will determine whether there has been a Code violation. Both sides will have the opportunity to present their evidence to the adjudicator through the examination and cross-examination of witnesses. Applicants may be unrepresented and are given great latitude in their examinations, given their

lack of legal training.

As a respondent, you will most likely have legal counsel acting on your behalf. At the end of the hearing, the adjudicator will review the evidence and make findings of fact and law. This is a lengthy process and the outcome can take months. Ultimately, the adjudicator will issue a written decision that will contain the order and the reasons for its decision.

In Conclusion

Principals and vice-principals work with people. Managing human relationships within the workplace is complex. It is always important to

It is always important to ensure that schools are striving to provide a work place and a learning environment where it is evident that equity and inclusion are valued.

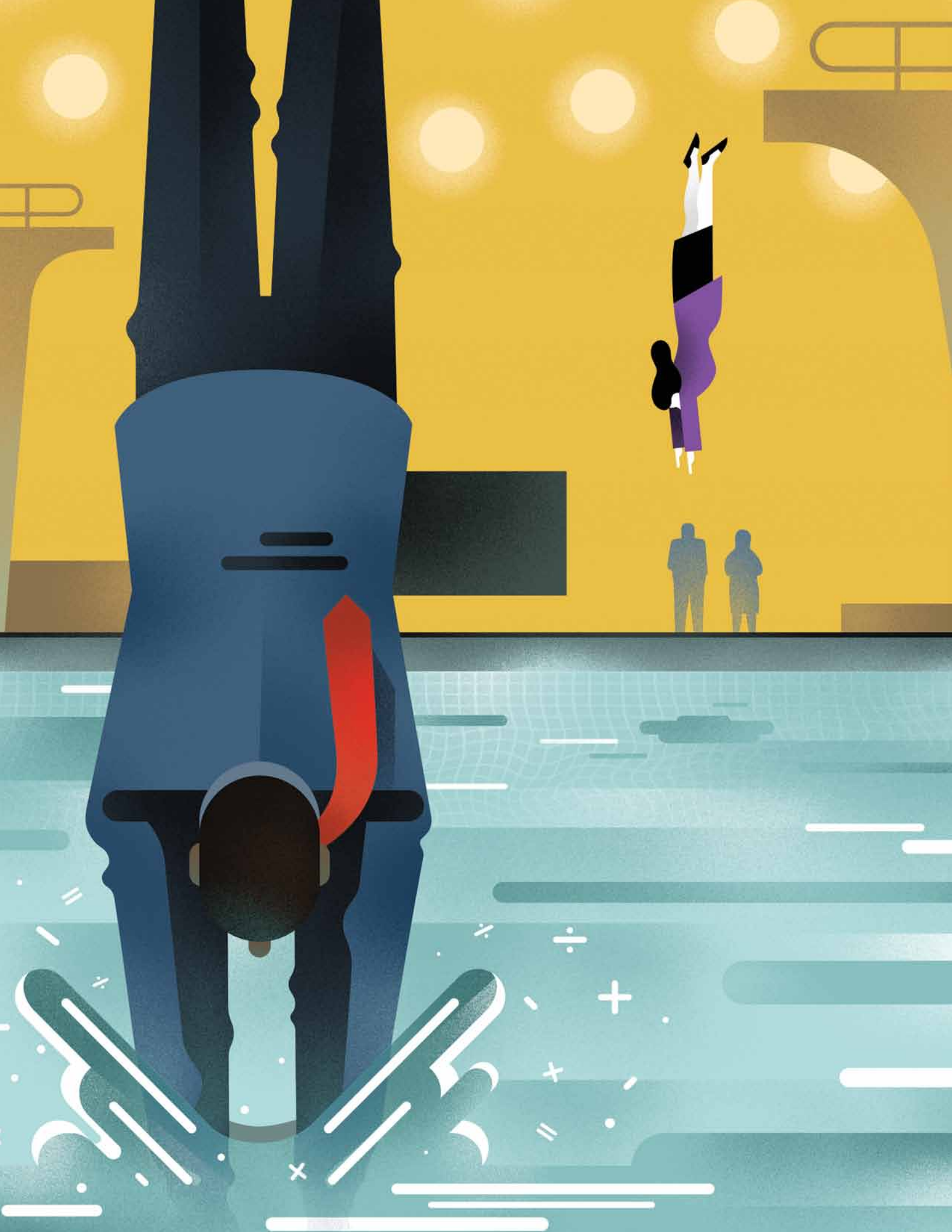
ensure that schools are striving to provide a work place and a learning environment where it is evident that equity and inclusion are valued. It is important to review the School's Code of Conduct with staff, students and the School Council in an effort to ensure that the principles around human dignity and respect are upheld.

More importantly, building an inclusive, caring environment takes the work of a team. Each school is required to have a Caring and Safe School Team that looks at school culture strategically to ensure that students and staff feel supported and included within their school community. Making these plans come to life is a critical part of developing a positive school climate that is respectful and inclusive. The principal plays a key role in distributing leadership, supporting the team and monitoring the progress of this initiative. School climate surveys are a good assessment tool for gathering evidence that the team's work is meeting its goals.

When incidents happen where there is an allegation of an individual or group feeling that they are being discriminated against or harassed based on a prohibited ground under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the principal and vice-principal need to take these allegations seriously and investigate the situation thoroughly. Documenting the interviews, the follow-up with staff and parents and the proactive steps you have taken to ensure a harassment free work place will be helpful if you do end up responding to a complaint.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, things do not get resolved and the individual may file a human rights complaint. If you are on the receiving end of this type of complaint, we would encourage you to contact the Protective Services Team as well as your supervisory officer for support and assistance. ▲

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Avoiding Utopia through a Reality Check

A principal team's journey into the classroom

One of the biggest challenges that principals face when introducing new initiatives or instructional strategies is breaking through teachers' beliefs that administrators no longer understand the reality of the classroom. Principals in particular, especially those who are more seasoned, will struggle with changing this mindset because of the years separating their last experience of teaching in a classroom.

By Lisa Coffey and Marla Newton

Illustration by Dave Murray

In Viviane Robinson's 2006 article entitled *Putting Education Back into Educational Leadership*, Robinson cautions that researchers who advocate for new strategies or approaches "without demonstrating an appreciation of current realities risk being described as utopian and ... alienating those they seek to influence." Given the demands and scope of the principals' job, she argues for authentic opportunities for school leaders to develop their pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge to be stronger instructional leaders.

Setting Learning Goals and Envisioning Utopia

The leading driver in our recent Principal Learning Team, initiated in the Halton District School Board in 2014, was our identified need and desire, as a group of eight school administrators, to learn more about the content and methodology of teaching mathematics so that we could become more effective instructional leaders in our respective schools. We began our journey with a book study, led by Lisa Coffey, an experienced principal in the Halton school board. Using the text *Accessible Mathematics: 10 Instructional Shifts That Raise Student Achievement* by Steven Leinward, the team examined the components of effective mathematics instruction. As we deepened our knowledge regarding mathematical discourse, representation, consolidation and assessment, we began to ask ourselves what these practices would look and sound like in our classrooms. We wondered how we could help our teachers to adopt and expand their knowledge of these teaching and learning strategies. We wondered, too, if our participation in this Principal Learning Team would impact teacher efficacy in our respective schools.

Influenced by the work of Katz and Dack (*Intentional Interruption*) and the power of collaborative inquiry in constructing understanding (Capacity Building Series – *Collaborative Teacher Inquiry*) we were committed to doing not only excellent work, but the "right" work. (Intentional Interruption, p.4)

Halton principals had built a foundation for focusing on "the right work" from a series of learning, led by Tricia Dyson, superintendent of leadership, over the past few years.

A Reality Check

After a year of book study, and prompted by our Student Achievement Officer, Marla Newton, we agreed to take the plunge into the classroom. Marla encouraged us to deepen our knowledge by engaging in the CIL-M model of professional learning. Drawing on the research of Catherine Bruce and Tara Flynn, *Assessing the Effects of Collaborative Professional Learning: Efficacy Shifts in a Three-Year Mathematics Study*, we began the process of co-planning, co-teaching and co-debriefing our lessons. We decided to learn the mathematics as we went along.

Borrowing two classrooms, one in a middle school and one in a pri-

mary/junior school, we planned and taught lessons, including our math coaches, based on what the teachers of these two classrooms would normally be teaching. The classroom teacher let us know ahead of time the strand/concept of mathematics that the students were working on, and we would take responsibility for all components of the subsequent lesson. Teachers were also invited to observe.

We wanted to understand how to develop rich, open and parallel tasks, and how to do an effective consolidation of the mathematics lesson. We wanted to be able to practice teaching mathematics using the three-part lesson format, as many of us – although past teachers of mathematics – had not ever taught mathematics using this paradigm. We also wanted to learn more about Mental Math, specifically Number Talks, as this was one of our board's initiatives.

Our work in the CIL: M model was also supported by Elmore's work in Instructional Rounds. In the book *Instructional Rounds in Education*, Elmore states that "we have to learn the work by doing the work, not by telling other people to do the work, not by having done the work at some time in the past, and not by hiring experts who can act as proxies for our knowledge about how to do the work."

Elmore explains that it is important to have a common understanding of the nature of our work. This in turn forced us to refine our language and hone our observation skills. We had to practice being nonjudgmental observers, and to this end, we began our work by going into classes and taking notes on what the students were doing and saying. We focused on the instructional core: the actual task the students were working on, and the interactions of the teacher and students in relation to this task.

Our collective knowledge was deepened as we sifted and sorted through our initial observations of a grade 6 mathematics lesson. We learned how to be more nonjudgmental in our observations and looked for patterns in the problem of practice we had identified. This was not an easy task, for as administrators we are used to placing judgments on what we see. This training acquainted us with the principles of pedagogical documentation, as we learned to listen to, and observe from, what the students were doing and saying.

Alongside our classroom experiences we read journal articles related to cognitively rich tasks, math conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, reasoning and dispositions. We watched videos on Number Talks and came to understand how to label the mathematical thinking. One

We focused on the instructional core:

the actual task the students were working on, and the interactions of the teacher and students in relation to this task.

of the strengths of the composition of the group, noted by a participant, was the freedom to "ask dumb questions" and to state that "I just don't get the math" without fear of reprisal or judgment.

What Makes a Great Principal?

- Have the learning team establish common learning goals and encourage learning outside the group that can be brought back for sharing
- Make effective practices in math part of the learning, but also how to lead staff in moving student learning forward
- Create a safe, welcoming, risk-free environment where participants can admit they don't know where to start. Building relationships and trust assures longevity for deeper learning
- Take the plunge and co-teach with a math coach or teacher – you will understand better how students learn, your staff will respect that you are willing to take risks and you will also better understand how students learn mathematics

The changes in leadership reported by all the participants included a much greater confidence in leading the mathematics focus in their respective buildings and being able to be more of a risk taker in their own learning. Many of the principals discovered that getting into classrooms in their colleagues' schools helped them to understand the components and complexity of effective math instruction. They stated that the learning in the PLT helped to sharpen their focus and enabled them to provide feedback to teachers in their own schools.

Several principals replicated the lessons they had observed in the PLTs in their schools, thereby modeling and inviting collaborative learning. As a result of this modeling, principals saw greater use of exit passes, and less reliance on worksheets. One school noted a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in the Gauss Mathematics Test: a testament to teachers' growing comfort with external measures of student achievement. The importance of the principal being a lead learner was underscored by one participant's comment, "If you are not a lead learner, you are granting permission for someone to step out."

This model of professional learning for administrators is not only cost effective for boards. More importantly, it allows for significant learning on the part of administrators in a nonthreatening and nonjudgmental environment. Although some of the members had spent time together doing a book study prior to engaging in the CIL: M model, it was not a prerequisite to its success. As one of the new members of the group stated, "We were all here to learn, with no one to report on our learning."

Committing to one half day or one full day approximately every 6-8 weeks enabled the learning to continue in between the sessions. Participants reported looking forward to the sessions and keeping up with the

readings so as not to disappoint their colleagues. They found that being able to share the fact that they were involved in learning helped to foster an inquiry stance in their schools. Sharing their learning and the questions they were leaving the sessions with helped to promote discussion and inquiry in others.

An additional benefit of embedded professional learning for principals is that staff see their efforts to learn in an authentic context, encouraging teachers to be more comfortable taking risks in practice and in receiving feedback as their principals were doing.

While the issue of increased student achievement as a result of being involved in Professional Learning Teams has yet to be proved, it is important to note that increases in principal capacity and confidence in leading mathematical learning in schools cannot be underestimated in these mathematically challenging times. ▲

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See the Big Picture

The relationship between visual impairments and student performance

By Sheri Ainslie

Have you ever worked on a puzzle only to find that a piece was missing as you neared completion? If you have, you will know that feeling of dissatisfaction the semi-complete picture can evoke because it doesn't live up to the promise of the picture on the box, despite your efforts.

That is how I am feeling about students who are failing to meet the provincial standard for EQAO, or those who can meet the standard only with accommodations, such as text to speech software. What if we're missing a crucial piece of their puzzle? The research and learning upon which I have focused recent professional inquiry suggests there is.

This missing piece is actually a collection of related pieces called Vision Skills, and they have been called the 'hidden learning disability' for their knack for going unrecognized, misunderstood and unaddressed to the detriment of learners. Do not confuse Vision Skills with visual acuity, which is what most of us think of when we consider vision. In fact, visual acuity is just one of the following Vision Skills the American Optometric Association identifies as essential for learning:

- **Visual acuity** – the ability to see clearly in the distance for viewing the chalkboard, at an intermediate distance for the computer and up close for reading a book.
- **Eye focusing** – the ability to quickly and accurately maintain

clear vision as the distance from objects change, such as when looking from the chalkboard to a paper on the desk.

- **Eye tracking** – the ability to keep the eyes on target when looking from one object to another, or moving the eyes along a printed page.
- **Eye teaming** – the ability to coordinate and use both eyes together when moving the eyes along a printed page.
- **Eye-hand coordination** – the ability to use visual information to monitor and direct the hands.
- **Visual perception** – the ability to organize images on a printed page into letters, words and ideas and to understand and remember what is read.

You can see how each of the above skills would be necessary for reading and other learning tasks. Yet all but visual acuity go virtually unknown despite the fact that 75–90 per cent of learning in a classroom is visual, and estimates indicate 25 per cent of children have a vision problem significant enough to affect their school performance (according to

VisionandLearning.org, a website maintained by the College of Optometrists in Vision Development Award of Excellence winner Dr. Mary McMains).

In a ground breaking paper published in 2003, W.C. Maples assessed the Vision Skills of 540 students over three consecutive school years and compared these results with their demographic and achievement data. He found that Vision Skills were a *significantly* better predictor of academic success than both socio-economics and race (Maples, 2003). The Ontario Ministry of Education document *Learning For All* refers to achievement gaps related to socio-economic status, and many initiatives have sought to boost the performance of students growing up in adversity. If Vision Skills are a significantly better predictor of learning success than socio-economic status, why is it so little known about in education circles?

In addition to being overshadowed, another reason the Vision Skills piece is so often missing is that it can be misunderstood. This is not surprising, considering the clinical symptoms of poor Vision Skills significantly overlap with the diagnostic criteria for ADHD (five of the nine DSM symptoms are identical). In fact, one study found a three per cent incidence of Convergence Insufficiency (a common eye-teaming problem) in the general population and 15.9 per cent in the ADHD population (Granet et al, 2005). Why are poor Vision Skills more common in the ADHD population? Could it be, at least in part, because the symptoms are so similar?

Another study found that even very low levels of blur or near strain were enough to trigger symptoms suggestive of ADHD on the Conners Continuous Performance Test (Poltavski et al, 2012). When a child with Vision Skills deficits is reading or doing nearwork, the words may appear to come in and out of focus, jump or float around; they may keep losing their place; they may get a burning sensation in their eyes; or they may feel mentally exhausted and frustrated after working for only short periods of time. These symptoms would make it hard for anyone to sustain attention, let alone a beginning reader.

With some fascinating research involving Ontario students in 2012, Dr. Patrick Quaid (www.gvvc.ca), found that students who are on IEPs for Reading were eight times more likely to have poor Vision Skills versus students who don't have IEPs. In another study out of New York State, researchers Johnson and Zaba found that 68 per cent of the young

offenders tested failed one or more developmental eye movement test(s). They observed that, "It is difficult for a treatment program, particularly an academic one, to be effective if the adolescent lacks adequate visual skills" (Johnson & Zaba, 1999).

Enter the missing puzzle piece. If it is difficult for academic interventions to be effective on students who lack

There was no comprehensive screening and intervention process for vision skills ... and there is no one silver bullet to 'fix' learning problems.

adequate visual skills, how do we determine who they are early on in their education careers and intervene before they are on IEPs, regarded as inattentive, and failing to meet provincial standards?

Teachers Louise McCulloch and Judy Richards teamed up with Dr. Barbara Patterson in Saskatoon to answer this question in 2006. In their study entitled *The Efficacy of Vision Therapy in the Kindergarten Setting*, they "hypothesized that school might be the best place to screen and provide consistent remediation for children with visual efficiency problems." They observed that there are many school-based screening and intervention programs in place to support struggling learners: speech/language, fine motor, cognitive, etc.

Yet there was no comprehensive screening and intervention process for Vision Skills. The authors acknowledged that reading is a complex process, and there is no one silver bullet to 'fix' learning problems. However, the results of their study led them to conclude that school-based vision screening and therapy "provided a missing component of the multi-modal methodology required for assisting kindergarteners to be more successful in acquiring letter recognition and the scanning skills needed to acquire the reading process."

I recently created a school-based Vision Skills screening process for my Principal's Qualification Program Practicum

FACT
A 2007 study found that
80%
of 461 assessed adolescents who were identified by their high schools as poor readers met the criteria for 'inadequate' or 'weak' visual skills in one or more areas.

and implemented the process as a leadership learning inquiry. The results were promising and compelling, with strategies that can be applied to support learners in any school. What follows are steps I took to initiate Vision Skills screening at our school.

BUILD AN AWARENESS AMONG STAFF

The first step towards supporting students experiencing weak Vision Skills is to deepen staff understanding of vision and learning, beyond visual acuity. With the many different reading assessments used by teachers to determine student need and improve achievement, teachers are well positioned to observe hallmarks of poor Vision Skills. But they have to know what they are looking for, as some symptoms are easier to connect to vision than others. Rubbing eyes, excessive blinking, squinting or holding the book too close are some of the easier ones. Many others are not naturally associated with vision, such as: does not listen when spoken to directly, talks excessively, gives up easily, avoids tasks, blurts out answers and takes an inordinate amount of time to complete work.

The College of Optometrists on Vision Development (COVD) has published a list of symptoms of learning-related vision problems on their website at COVD.org. All educators should be aware of the look-fors on this list and watch for them in students who are struggling.

After an information session on Vision Skills, teachers at our school tracked the signs and symptoms from the COVD's list during their benchmark assessments for reading. They observed students who were displaying hallmark behaviours and referred them for screening.

SCHOOL-BASED SCREENING

With parent permission, referred students participated in a Vision Skills screening process that consisted of a symptoms survey (Convergence Insufficiency Symptom Survey – CISS) and computer based visual tasks (Binocular Vision Assessment – BVA). Both provide instant pass/fail reports.

While the BVA software can only be ordered by a vision professional and operated with appropriate training, the CISS is free (gvtc.ca) and can be administered by anyone: simply read the 15 questions exactly as they appear on the page and score the responses according to the instructions. The questions probe how frequently the individual experiences

symptoms associated with weak Vision Skills. The CISS has been validated through peer-reviewed research with children as young as 9. A score of 16 or higher is suggestive of a Vision Skills issue.

In Dr. Quaid's aforementioned research, he found CISS scores to be a strong predictor of which students would be on IEPs. In my inquiry, 56 per cent of the students screened failed the CISS. One student in particular presented with a symptom score of 41, was referred to an Optometrist, and after 5 months with new corrective lenses and home-based exercises, she scored 17 when the CISS was re-administered. It is only logical to predict that her achievement will improve with her visual burden lessened.

CONNECT WITH LOCAL PROFESSIONALS

The COVD, among other services, offers board certification for eye doctors who specialize in Vision Skills for childhood development (look for initials FCOVD after the doctor's name). Its website has a search engine identifying doctors geographically close by. You might consider asking these doctors to be part of staff professional development, present at Parent Involvement Conferences or receive referrals for students whose CISS scores warrant further investigation. (It should be noted that screening does not replace routine professional care.)

Furthermore, would anyone argue the contribution an Optometrist could make as part of any school board's Multi-Disciplinary team? Adequately functioning Vision Skills should be ruled out before more costly testing such as Speech Language or psycho-educational assessments are considered, and certainly before medicating a child for ADD/ADHD.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR INTERVENTION

One might suggest that Vision Skills are the realm of health-related ministries and associations, not the business of Education. To that I would respond that schools are best for identifying students who are struggling academically and demonstrating hallmarks of Vision Skills issues in their daily work, while vision care professionals are best for testing, diagnosing and prescribing treatment for Vision Skills dysfunction.

Of the students who failed the screening at our school, 43 per cent reported back that they had followed up with a doctor and that a Vision Skills deficiency had been diagnosed.

FACT

56%

of the students screened failed the Convergence Insufficiency Symptom Survey

Researchers found that 80 per cent of the identified students met the criteria for 'inadequate' or 'weak' visual skills in one or more areas.

These diagnoses were related to reduced near vision (the kind needed for seatwork and reading), weak eye movement control (the kind needed to track text across a page) and poor ability to adjust focus (which is needed whenever we change our gaze).

So how do we work together to fill in the missing piece and support students whose Vision Skills are holding them back from living up to the picture of their potential?

An innovative pilot project between the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO), The Hospital for Sick Children (Sick-Kids) and McMaster University is on the right track. Their project provides vision screenings for kindergarten students in 10 Ontario elementary schools. Following the school-based screening, students who were identified with a vision problem were referred to an optometrist, who conducted an eye health examination on-site.

At Paisley Road Public School, the project unearthed vision skills issues in more than one third of the children screened, and ensured timely follow-up services. In cases where glasses were prescribed, they were provided free of charge through OAO's Eye See...Eye Learn® program, which provides a complimentary pair of glasses to junior kindergarten students with their eye exam.

One study of 144 beginning readers published by the Journal of Optometric Vision Development concluded that,

"visual factors were a *primary* cause for beginning reading failure in children" (Young et al, 1994). Another study out of California in 2007 assessed 461 adolescents who were identified by their high schools as poor readers. Researchers found that 80 per cent of the identified students met the criteria for 'inadequate' or 'weak' visual skills in one or more areas (Grisham et al, 2007).

What if early screening and intervention processes like the one mentioned above were in place for these students? Would they still be struggling in high school?

A final reason the Vision Skills piece is so often missing is that although 'routine' eye exams are covered annually for children, comprehensive Vision Skills assessments and vision therapy services are not considered routine, and therefore not OHIP insured. Unfortunately, there are fewer things more routinely needed by a reader (especially a beginning one) than eye teaming, eye focusing and eye tracking. Establishing processes that ensure students have adequately functioning Vision Skills is an action education and health leaders are morally obligated to take to support equity and well-being for students. ▲

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TACKLING MANY



Minister Hunter puts her past successes to work in education

By Peggy Sweeney

Mitzie Hunter has spent most of her career working to make the places where people live better in some way. While employed in the tech sector as a Regional Director for Bell Canada, she worked to bridge the digital divide, bringing technology into the lives of people so that they could communicate better and businesses could flourish.

C

CHALLENGES

She then worked in development as the Vice-President of Goodwill Industries, strengthening employment access to people who were on the margins of society, people who wanted to be fully included in the workforce. “Work provides dignity and a sense of connectedness, as well as economic independence.”

She also served as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, studying the value of a home as one of the social determinants of health.

I recognize that it takes a team to do this job of education. And in Ontario we have a terrific team of people who are committed and are devoted to the task of educating Ontario’s children. It’s an incredible sector to be in.

“One of the things that makes our communities so great is having a mix of incomes living together, among the institutions that are at the centre of those communities like schools and recreation centres.”

When she began her work as the CEO of the Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance, all of Hunter’s roles up until that point came together. “We were working with the leadership in government, business and the community sector, collaborating on large challenges that the Greater Toronto and Hamilton region would face. We studied how to best solve those issues, like reducing people’s commute times by investing in public transit, investing in infrastructure, or looking at greening the region by reducing the consumption of electricity in commercial offices. There was an initiative called Greening Greater Toronto that we helped to bring together, a champion circle of leaders to move that idea forward.

“When I look back at my career, most of the work that I’ve done has been all about bringing people together to solve issues. I strongly believe in collaboration and in working together, and have spent most of my working life looking at how I can strengthen communities.”

Her strong work ethic, community involvement and dedication to social causes caught the eye of local leaders looking to recruit political candidates. In 2013, she was

asked to run provincially in a by-election in the riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. She agreed to run, and won.

When Hunter arrived at Queen’s Park, she was named the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, and also served as Associate Minister of Finance. In June 2016, she received a call asking her to take on a bigger role – that of Minister of Education. “Mitzie has always been a community builder, dedicated to opening doors for people and creating inclusive environments,” said Premier Wynne. “Throughout her career, she has built strong partnerships with communities across the province. She is committed to building a more equitable education system for Ontario’s young people.”

Hunter knew what a big opportunity this was. “I really felt that the Premier was entrusting me with one of her most important portfolios. I knew how important it was to

the Premier, and how education touches everyone. We value education in this province, and I know from my own family and in my own life, the importance of education.”

In 1975, Hunter’s parents immigrated to Canada from Jamaica. She was four years old at the time. “One of the reasons we came to Canada was because they thought that we could have a better life here. And it was, and a big part of that was because of the education system.” After high school, she graduated from the University of Toronto with a BA and a MBA from the Rotman School of Management.

“By asking me to become the new Minister, the Premier was carefully placing this in my hands, and I immediately committed to her that I would do the best job that I could.”

Every Minister brings certain qualities to their portfolio. What are Hunter’s? “I think the most important thing I bring is the ability to work with people. There are many, many different stakeholders, partners and groups in education, and everyone brings value to the table. One of my rules as Minister is to listen. Ontario has an excellent education system that has been developed over many years, and the learning that occurs, occurs because of the work of our education partners.”

As an MPP, one of Hunter’s goals was to visit a school in her riding once a week. Now that visit takes place all over Ontario. “I have been in many classrooms and I see the engagement of teachers and students. I walk down hallways that are maintained, and I know someone is paying attention to that. And I always pop in to the office and say hello to whoever is there, whether it be the secretary, principal, or vice principal. I recognize that it takes a team to do this job of education. And in Ontario we have a terrific team of people who are committed and are devoted to the task of educating Ontario’s children. It’s an incredible sector to be in.”

While visiting schools is a highlight of the role, there are many challenging issues that need hands-on attention every day. “We have to respond to the needs of the 21st century because Ontario must continue to lead. I would like to see the education sector really

“It takes someone who really embraces that type of diversity in their job to be successful as a principal.”



Education Minister Mitzi Hunter (second from right) and Senior Policy Advisor Joseph Marcus meet with (from left) OPC President Kelly Kempel and Executive Director Ian McFarlane on Principal's Day at Queens Park.

embrace that, and move us forward.

“We have achieved so much in terms of increased graduation rates and achievement scores, but at the same time, no jurisdiction can afford to sit still. So it’s important that we continue to lead. It’s important that we pay attention and recognize those areas that need additional support. As an education community, we have to find ways of ensuring that all students have an opportunity to achieve their potential and succeed.”

In the short term, the Minister has prioritized her goals. In addition to achieving excellence and closing the achievement gap, she also wants to focus on equity and well-being, two initiatives that she considers imperative

for success in the system. “While there are some really good programs in place for student and staff well-being in some boards, we need to ensure that there is consistency across the system.”

Another big focus will be the math strategy. “We want to see similar results as we have seen in literacy, when we focused on literacy. We want to pay attention to groups of students that are in need of additional supports such as our First Nations, Native and Inuit populations, ensuring that we respond to the commitments in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report, so that we can reach our indigenous learners.

“And there are other underrepresented

groups, young people in care or the black community, where we need to look more closely at their graduation rates, determining why they are below the average and how we will address that. We’ll be looking at having measurements in place. How do we support school boards in being able to collect that type of data, so that we can use it to inform what we are doing, and to support our efforts to support our students?”

The Minister’s mandate letter, a letter given to her by the Premier outlining expectations for the coming session, also focuses on preparing for the highly skilled work force, experiential learning, STEM and coding. Clearly, the Minister has a very busy “to do” list.



“Some principal somewhere is doing it, and we need to support them, shine a spotlight and share that information. That will be success.”

While there are many initiatives to tackle, she recognizes that they don't all get done in the ministry itself. “All of the curriculum, policy and strategy that is rolled out from the ministry is translated in our schools through the school leader. So I very much respect the role of our principals. They are incredible people who are champions in their schools. They have a combination of positive influence and resiliency. They are able to adapt to change, and respond to the needs of their students and the teaching community.”

Over the past decade, a common debate has been whether principals and vice-principals should be instructional leaders or the manager in a school. Hunter doesn't see it as an either/or. “I certainly see our principals needing to be good managers, because there are many systems that they have to manage under the roof of a school, and they have to have the skill sets in order to do that, while working with teams of people in the school community. But I think the most significant role is that of a leader. I see our principals as setting the pace in our schools, working to achieve the goals and being able to do that with many different priorities coming at

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them all at once. Being able to demonstrate that type of leadership is very important.

“A few years ago I had the opportunity to be principal for a day through the Learning Partnership program. It was really eye-opening. I realized that sometimes the principal has to be a counselor for colleagues who need a sounding board and a listening ear. That’s an incredibly important role, because at the end of the day, that classroom teacher has to go back in and deliver the curriculum and the pedagogy that goes with it. Sometimes they just need that encouraging word. So the principal acts as a coach as well.

“I truly respect the role principals play. They wear many hats. And they are lateral thinkers. It takes someone who really embraces that type of diversity in their job to be successful as a principal.”

Through this interview, the Minister wants to take the opportunity to speak directly to all OPC Members. “What I would like to say to principals and vice-principals is thank you. You are taking on a role that is challenging. There’s so much we depend on in that role. I know that you are working really hard to deliver the results that we see each and every year in Ontario’s education system. And you deserve a lot of the credit.”

Looking back to her first days in Canada, building a new home and settling into a new community, could anyone ever have predicted that this young person would end up heading up the education ministry? “What I remember about being a child – from my parents, my family and great teachers along the way – is encouragement. Everyone always told me that I could do it, I could be more, I could achieve more. And so I had that instilled in me from an early age, and it was reinforced at key moments throughout my life. In a way, there were no limits. My family, my mother in particular, would always tell me she was not surprised by where I ended up next. They have always been very affirming. That has really helped me to take on big challenges in my career, knowing that there are these people who surround me, and they believe in me. I’ve been lucky to have very good mentors as well, who have done the same.”

Despite all the priorities, tasks, respon-

sibilities and expectations ahead of her, the Minister hopes to keep up her school visits. “On the first day of school last September, I was in a school and the principal was just amazing. He was talking about mindfulness and well-being. He was also practicing gratitude. He was providing, for his staff, the students and their parents, that very positive

school environment. I really see that many of the answers we’re looking for are already within the system. Some principal somewhere is doing it, and we need to support them, shine a spotlight and share that information. That will be success.” ▲

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LEADING EQUITY

Supporting students who are, identify as,
or are perceived as LGBTQ*

By Jill Ott, Jan Murphy and Kim Christianson

Illustration by Jack Dylan

“In reaffirming the values of fairness, equity and respect as essential principles of our publicly funded education system, the Ontario government’s equity and inclusive education strategy helps to ensure that all students have the opportunities they need to fulfill their potential.” – *Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools* (2014), p.6

In *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (2014), promoting well-being is identified as one of Ontario’s four provincial education goals, emphasizing the need to focus on both academic success and the whole child – their cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. Ensuring equity is another provincial education goal, making it a priority to support all students to reach their full potential,

regardless of background or circumstance.

Research shows that a safe and positive learning environment is essential for student success and well-being. Students who feel welcome, accepted and connected to school are more likely to succeed academically. In addition to academic success, the effectiveness of a school involves the development of relationships among staff and students to promote a safe environment and a positive school climate.

**Note: In this article, LGBTQ is used as an inclusive term representing diverse gender identities and sexual orientations which include, but are not limited to, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, two-spirited, queer and questioning.*

The Leading Equity Project

All students in Ontario schools must feel valued, accepted and included. A safe, equitable and inclusive school contributes to every student's sense of well-being and supports high standards of student achievement. These are the guiding principles from the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy for Ontario, which formed the foundation for the Leading Equity Project, a unique tri-association

in a coherent and coordinated manner.

A project leadership team, consisting of three project leads representing each of the principal associations, collaborated on the design, development and implementation of all aspects of the project. This alliance was designed to assist principals and vice-principals to build professional knowledge and capacity focused on supporting students who are LGBTQ, identify as LGBTQ or are perceived

December of 2015.

Each resource scanned was annotated to indicate suggested strategies for use within schools; the audience included staff, students, personal reflection and parents. Each of the resources was explicitly linked to supporting students who are, identify as or are perceived as LGBTQ and to the Ontario Leadership Framework. The outcome of the explore and scan was the development of a searchable database annotated by principals and vice-principals, for principals and vice-principals. Resources are searchable utilizing key topic words, and can be accessed from the associate/member side of the OPC website.

This purposefully designed database provides the user with the unique ability to access resources from multiple sources. During the consultation and development phase, it was clearly and consistently articulated to the leadership team that the ideal completed resource would be a "one stop shopping" engine to link multiple organization learning supports. In an effort to be responsive to needs, the database provides access to each of the principal associations, as well as the Ontario Educators Service Corporation (OESC) website. Additionally, the OESC site hosts a searchable database, and contains extensive Equity and Inclusive Education training modules and resources to support principals' and vice-principals' professional learning needs.

Next, the Leading Equity Project convened a focus group consisting of principals, vice-principals, superintendents, students, parents and community partners. The feedback received from this diverse group assisted in establishing the project's next steps, as well as informing the content of subsequent learning components that included a specialized professional learning event. Many additional voices were sought for input and feedback throughout the project's journey during presentations at The Accepting Schools Expert Panel and The Minister's Principal Reference Group (MPRG). Feedback was solicited at each consultation, and surveys were administered. Dialogue with students representing diverse gender identities and sexual orientations occurred throughout the year-long project.

“School leaders facilitate this process by listening to and acting upon community feedback and by engaging others to work in the best interests of all students.”



partnership focusing on strengthening equity leadership capacity among school leaders as they support students who are LGBTQ, who identify as LGBTQ or who are perceived as LGBTQ within the context of safe, inclusive and accepting schools.

Implementation of these principles within learning communities requires principals and vice-principals to intentionally and explicitly plan to support the needs of all students. The Leading Equity Project, a Ministry funded initiative involving Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO), the Catholic Principals' Council | Ontario (CPCO) and the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), was conceptualized to help meet the unique needs of leaders in all four publicly funded education systems

as LGBTQ. The leadership team for this year-long initiative intentionally designed professional learning resources and experiences to explicitly provide current research and evidence-informed equity and inclusive education practices and strategies into school improvement plans.

Resource Exploration and Focus Group

A collaborative review of existing resources was undertaken to determine which components could be leveraged specifically to build school leader understanding and capacity in each of the four systems. This was conducted by a team that included the project leads and two associates from each principal association. A resource scan on equity, diversity and safe, inclusive and accepting schools began in

Professional Learning and Capacity Building

“The whole-school community has a collective responsibility to foster student achievement, well-being, and success. School leaders facilitate this process by listening to and acting upon community feedback and by engaging others to work in the best interests of all students.” *Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (EIES)*, 2014 (p.33)

Principals, vice-principals and board teams from across Ontario came together for an Equitable and Inclusive Leadership Specialized Professional Learning Session in May of 2016. Attendees came to listen to and dialogue with knowledgeable leaders, students and one another. Foremost on their minds was: How can we best support students who are LGBTQ, identify as LGBTQ or are perceived as being LGBTQ?

A presentation by Shelley Steele of HeartSpeak began by taking learners on a series of gender journeys. Excerpts from HeartSpeak documentaries entitled “Gender Preferred” and “Gender, Pride and Resilience” were shared. The documentaries captured the lived experiences and narratives of members of the LGBTQ community and their families. The evening ended with “Being Sarah,” which chronicles the life journey and transition of Sarah, a college educator, whose assigned sex is male, but who identifies as a female. Following the documentary, learners were afforded the privilege of meeting Sarah and engaging in a facilitated, authentic and reflective dialogue.

During the session, principals and vice-principals were also engaged in co-learning and collaborating with and from many knowledge leaders, including author Peter DeWitt (*Dignity For All: Safeguarding LGBT Students*), Annie Kidder (People for Education: Measuring What Matters), Eric Roher (Borden, Ladner, Gervais), Ty Smith (EGALE Human Rights Trust Canada) and student panels representing diverse gender identities, sexual orientations and education sectors. Education leaders gained a deeper understanding of the attitudes and influences surrounding safe and welcoming school envi-

ronments – specifically for students who are, identify as or are perceived to be members of the LGBTQ community. Closing out the day was an address by the then Minister of Education, Liz Sandals, followed by an opportunity to apply new knowledge during school and board improvement planning.

Answering the important question of how best to support students in the LGBTQ community became the focus for dialogue



and intentional school improvement planning for those in attendance. Capturing education leaders’ and students’ thinking and feedback during multiple consultations was critically important to the project leads during the learning, as well as throughout the year-long project to guide and inform next steps. This then assisted with the development of precise and responsive professional learning supports. A review and analysis of the data gathered from multiple consultations allowed the leadership team to collaborate to design professional learning supports to meet the unique needs of leaders within all four education sectors.

Deconstruction of the data gathered throughout the year-long project illuminated the most prevalent learning needs. To

support identified learning needs, eLearning Modules, currently in the development phase, will become available as part of the Principal Development Course (PDC) series. These modules will be grouped into the following four main themes: Fostering Positive Culture and Climate, Fostering Allies, Fostering Evidence Informed Decision Making and Fostering Personal Leadership Resources.

**“LGBT students
who are supported
by teachers and
administration
feel a sense of safety
in their school
environment ...”**

Fostering Positive Culture and Climate

The *Education Act* requires principals and vice-principals to create a positive school climate that is safe, inclusive and accepting regardless of age, citizenship, race, ethnic origin, place of origin, ancestry, colour, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex, family status or disability. The key leadership action of intentionality is central to fostering a positive culture and climate. Other critical elements include engaging in equity walks, understanding the impact of bias, being reflexive, capturing and honouring multiple diverse voices and nurturing student agency within the school.

“This fragile student population needs support from teachers and administrators because of the discrimination they often feel

“Use inclusive language that communicates that LGBTQ staff and family members are welcome and integrate them equitably into school life.”



when they are coming out to peers and family. LGBT students who are supported by teachers and administration feel a sense of safety in their school environment, and that sense of safety allows them to take healthy and positive risks, which builds their engagement in the school community. Students who are engaged in school are more inclined to succeed academically.” DeWitt, 2012, p.10

Fostering Allies

Fostering allies is vital to supporting students who are, identify as or are perceived as LGBTQ in our schools. Creating environments that foster these alliances requires intentionality on the part of school leaders. Other key aspects include adopting a collaborative team approach, the mobilization of school and board supports and accessing varied community expertise and resources.

“Help students form a Gay-Straight Alliance on site. Use inclusive language that communicates that LGBTQ staff and family members are welcome and integrate them equitably into school life.” *The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-Inclusive Education in Canada’s K-12 Schools*, p.157

Fostering Evidence Informed Decision Making

School leaders need to be aware of the law. They are also encouraged to use evidence from varied sources such as The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human

Rights Code, *The Education Act*, PPMs, School Board Policies and The Every Teacher Project and intentionally integrate these into decision making practices and plans for student success and well-being. The safety of students who are, identify as or are perceived as LGBTQ depends on their inclusion as fully respected members of the school community.

“Ensure that teachers, counsellors and administrators are aware of current legislation and school district policy, and receive thorough training in it.” *The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-Inclusive Education in Canada’s K-12 Schools*, p.157

Fostering Personal Leadership Resources

The Ministry of Education, in its November 2014 Research into Practice Monograph entitled *Resilient Active & Flourishing*, provides research to support the importance of resilience. Resilient traits include flexibility, empathy, realistic action planning, listening and problem-solving skills, self-confidence, optimism, a sense of humour and an ability to develop effective relationships, manage emotions and make social contributions. The key personal leadership qualities of proactivity, problem solving and resiliency can be paramount in supporting principals and vice-principals as they navigate LGBTQ inclusion, both personally and within their school communities.

Conclusion

Principals and vice-principals are continually

looking for support in fostering safe, inclusive and accepting schools and leading challenging conversations they may encounter with educators, parents, students and community members. It is crucial to understand the current available resources and how they apply to school leadership. It is the intention, and hope, of the Leading Equity Project Leadership Team that Ontario school leaders find the searchable database, determined themes for ongoing professional learning and the development of eLearning Modules to be valuable “go to” resources for their vital learning and improvement planning ahead. ▲

Jill Ott is the Project Lead for OPC. Jill retired from Peel DSB in 2015 as SEF Leader and Elementary Principal. Jan Murphy is the Project Lead for CPCO. Jan retired from Toronto Catholic DSB in 2015 as SEF Leader and Elementary Principal. Kim Christianson is the Project Lead for ADFO, and Elementary and Secondary Principal for Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l’Ontario.

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Principal's Qualification Program (PQP)

Part I: Modules 1 –6

Part II: Modules 7–12

April 1–2, 22–23, 29–30

May 13–14, 27–28

June 10–11

Saturdays: 8am to 4pm and

Sundays: 8am to 1:30pm

Registration Deadline: **March 17**

Principal's Development Course (PDC)

Module 3 – Leading an Equitable and Inclusive School

March 26 – April 8

Application Deadline: **March 19**

Module 4 – Mentoring Coaching and School Leadership

April 16 – May 20

Application Deadline: **April 9**

Module 5 – Collaborative Leadership Inquiry/Digital Leadership Portfolio

July 10 – July 28

Application Deadline: **July 3**

Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program (SOQP)

Module A – The Personal Perspective

July 9 – 11

Module B – Leadership/Management Perspective

July 12 – 14

Module C – The Provincial Perspective

July 9 – 11

Module D – The System Perspective

July 12 – 14

Application Deadline: **June 2**

For more information on the events and courses listed, visit www.principals.ca or email elc@principals.ca

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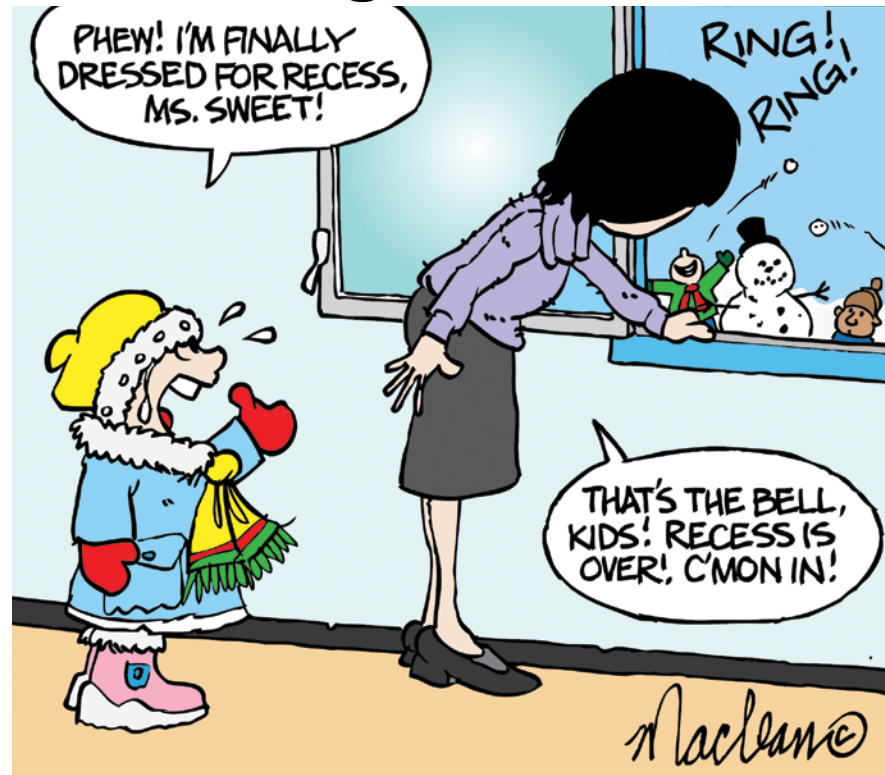


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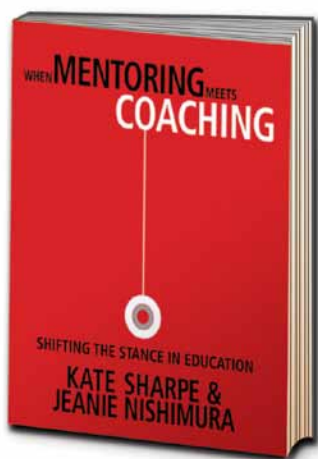
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When Mentoring Meets Coaching: Shifting the stance in education

By Kate Sharpe and Jeanie Nishimura

Pearson Canada, 2016

ISBN 9780134398341, \$39.96

Reviewed by Liana Lafranier

The need for formal mentoring programs to support education leaders continues to be critical for school systems to promote capacity-building and retain capable and qualified school leaders, be they teachers or administrators.

Coaching is a proven means of supporting individuals in building personal and professional skills and confidence. In *When Mentoring Meets Coaching*, Kate Sharpe and Jeanie Nishimura present their dynamic model of mentor-coaching, providing a powerful and unique approach to guide readers of their book to build capacity within their workplaces. The “shift in stance” Sharpe and Nishimura describe occurs when leaders listen whole-heartedly and ask powerful questions rather than engaging in “fixing and solving,” as is often the case. In so doing, leaders build shared responsibilities for outcomes and increased engagement within professional communities.

Sharpe and Nishimura have captured their personal reflections from their own teaching experiences, their work in this domain, a comprehensive review of the current research, and insights gathered from a diverse population of experienced “voices in the field,” including teachers, administrators, university professors, business and arts professionals and mentor-coaches

who have used this model in their practice. Their book features scenarios that illustrate the inherent potential of “being in relationship and in conversation about what matters deeply.”

In addition, Sharpe and Nishimura have included many practical activities that can be used to build concrete skills needed to leverage conversations with colleagues, staff and students. Perhaps the most evocative aspect of the book is the reflective questions that are posed at the end of each unit that both model the inquiry-based nature of mentor-coaching, as well as invite the reader to engage in deep learning about self and the ability to unlock potential in others.

For those wishing to delve more deeply into the content, Sharpe and Nishimura have provided explicit margin notes guiding readers to other sources of information to dig deeper. As well, digital support materials and tools are accessible on the website, including several videos and demonstrations of coaching for readers wishing to see the model in action.

Mentor-coaching provides the oppor-

tune framework for mentors to employ in supporting mentees to develop the skills that are set out in the Personal Leadership Resources contained in the Ontario Leadership Framework. The authors underscore the impact that mindset has on the relationship co-created by the mentor and mentee, and the outcomes that result from the work. The coaching stance of the mentor allows the mentee to accelerate the learning by accessing strengths and developing skills “from the inside out.” The mentor-coach’s value is in being intentional about helping the mentee to link thinking in the brain with feeling in the heart to do the work of school leadership in a sustainable fashion.

I, and many of my colleagues, have found the mentor-coaching model to be transformative in building positive relationships with stakeholders, and in supporting others in their personal and professional growth. Sharpe and Nishimura’s book is a must-read for education leaders and will serve as a key resource for all who are keen to adopt the role of mentor-coach. ▲

Liana Lafranier, retired Principal, Durham DSB, Mentor-Coaching Institute Facilitator and ACC (Associate Certified Coach).

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i Interested in writing a review for the OPC Register? Email Editor Peggy Sweeney at psweeney@principals.ca



Professionalism

How to bring it back into our conversations

PPM 159, entitled ‘Collaborative Professionalism,’ clarifies that educators have a commitment to establish productive work environments that promote professional cooperation and support between and amongst all levels of staff.

In implementing the PPM, educators will be able to rediscover the professional pride that has been a significant part of our collective history. It specifically mentions creating trusting environments where school personnel, school board officials, union leaders and ministry officials create the conditions under which we all learn from and with each other. The focus is to identify, promote and celebrate the professional behaviours that exist in our schools and buildings. By defining and identifying the professional encounters we observe daily, we can create a common language and purpose. Professional behaviours must become the collective expectation by which we identify ourselves and define and celebrate excellence in our practice.

The OCT Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession underscores the values of *care, respect, trust and integrity* as the descriptors for all interactions in the teaching profession. By using these four

values as benchmarks in our interactions, we share a common commitment of collaborative professionalism.

The Standards include explanations for each value. These explanations lead us easily into conversations on specific observations of professional behaviours. After training in descriptive feedback with/for students, educators noticed an increase in focus and direction. This skill is easily adaptable to adult conversations.

Leaders need to set overtly professional environments in schools. As an example, consider framing copies of the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession for display in your offices, staff rooms and referenced newsletters.

When writing personal notes to staff members, outline professional moments you have observed. Use this lens to view the interactions in your learning community and highlight what you observe and value together. If you need an example or two, conversations on professional

observation could include the following:

“I was so impressed with the way you listened carefully to Daniel in your class. You showed commitment to his well-being and empathy to his concern over which activity station he wished to join.” (Care, Respect, Integrity)

“During the science experiment, it was good that you drew attention to the way the students were problem-solving together.” (Care, Respect)

We must reconstruct an environment in our schools that inculcates a sense of pride in the valuable work we all are doing with students. Let the word *professional* be prominent and proud in your leadership language as you seek out and celebrate those behaviours and expertise worthy of note. Consider having teachers frame and display their university degrees at the entrance to their work areas. Gradually, you will see a valuable difference in how we all view our chosen profession. PPM 159 defines our collective responsibility to create a clear sense of professional pride and purpose in our work force. Using descriptive feedback centred on the OCT Standards is mutually beneficial. ▲

Retired from the principal role, Helen Evans works as the OPC Coordinator for International Exchanges and as an OCT coach through www.basicprincipals.ca.

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