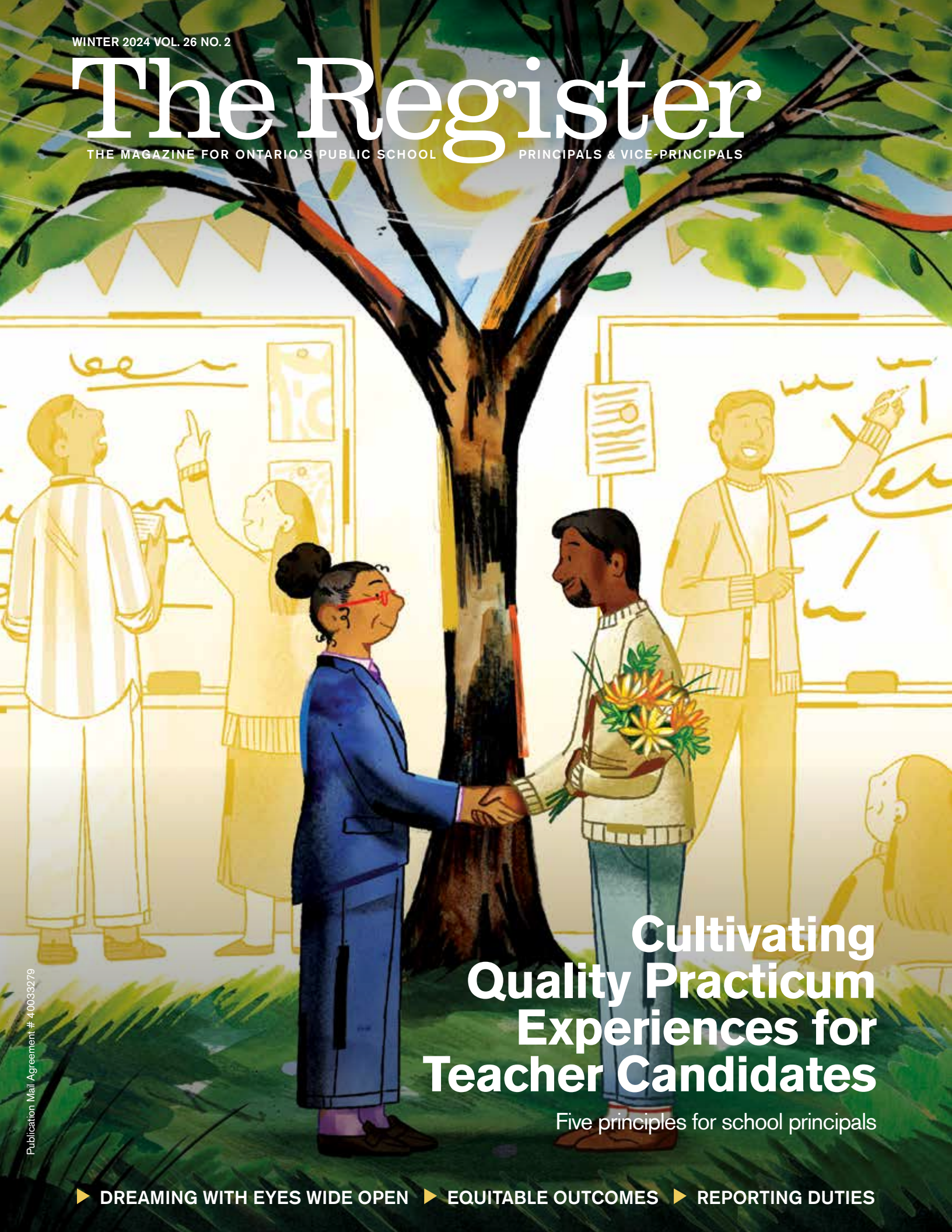


The Register

THE MAGAZINE FOR ONTARIO'S PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS



Cultivating Quality Practicum Experiences for Teacher Candidates

Five principles for school principals

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Dreaming With Your Eyes Open

The benefits of post-secondary learning are numerous and beneficial for all



Cover Illustration by Lynn Scurfield

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What I Would Do Differently

Personal reflections and career advice



In September, I attended the International Confederation of Principals Conference. I sat on a panel with five other very experienced school leaders from around the world. The topic was “What would you do differently?”

An Irish administrator led off humorously that he should have considered engineering instead. I responded that I would have waited longer before entering administration. After nine years in a classroom, I became a VP. As I reflect on my 25 years in administration, I can say unequivocally that I should have spent more time in the classroom. I had not gotten teaching out of my system.

Almost every day as a teacher, I felt great about the way the lessons went and the engagement of the students. When I became a vice-principal, I missed the classroom for a long time. I still do, just not as often. The principal and vice-principal roles have changed so much in 25 years. The jobs have become more dif-

ficult and stressful, and less amenable to personal and family time. The demands and scrutiny on the people in the role have increased immensely under the guise of efficiency and accountability. I have often wondered how people who are entering administration in their late 20s or early 30s can possibly do this work for 20-plus years. Many set goals of becoming a superintendent or even director, but most are in it “for the long haul.”

Surviving while being effective in the role is an interesting dilemma. My work with the Toronto School Administrators’ Association (OPC Toronto local) supporting colleagues allowed me to make a few observations and recommendations. I believe that a consistent board policy

that regularly reassigns administrators to new school assignments is good for both school boards and individual administrators. A move every five to seven years – with the administrator’s consultation and support – is the best approach. It’s good to work in different schools and communities and for staff to be exposed to different leadership styles.

I have advised countless Members about various voluntary and statutory leaves (personal, maternity, parental, secondments and deferred salary). My advice for those who plan to be in the role for many years is to consider pursuing as many voluntary leaves as you can afford. When it comes to parental leaves, I have always tried to convince colleagues not to return before they need to. I learned myself the hard way that time taken away from family is time you never get back, and something for which you will have a hard time forgiving yourself.

Deferred salary programs are a great opportunity to self-fund an entire year off with pay, to do whatever you want. The traditional program has been the “four over five” (spreading out four years’ salary over five years, with the fifth year being a non-work year). Administrators who have taken advantage of deferred salary leaves, especially those who were able to time them to be at the same time as a partner’s similar leave, have raved about these leaves and the positive impact on their wellness.

Many administrators also have access in their Terms and Conditions (T&C)

Agreement to secondment opportunities with other education sector organizations or personal leaves, during which they can pursue other work. This is a great opportunity to see how transferable their leadership experiences and skills in education are to other sectors, and to pursue career opportunities outside education after retirement.

When I started as an administrator, there was little discussion about workload and unreasonable demands for P/VPs, and no discussion about wellness. Today, school leaders as a group have never been younger and more overworked and stressed. I highly recommend that all P/VPs early in their careers give significant thought to including a “wellness plan” as part of their career path.

To those who are considering moving into administration, don't feel pressured to enter too early. Do so when you are ready, and not when others think you are. ▲



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The Register is published digitally three times a year and printed once each fall by the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC). The views expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the OPC. Reproduction of any part of this publication must be authorized by the editor and credited to the OPC and the authors involved. Letters to the editor and submissions on topics of interest to the profession are welcome. Although paid advertisements appear in this publication, the OPC does not endorse any products, services or companies, nor any of the claims made or opinions expressed in the advertisement.

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Fresh Art & Design Inc.

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SUBMISSIONS & IDEAS

Would you like to contribute to *The Register*?

Do you have an article, feedback or ideas?

Our editorial team would like to hear from you.

Deadlines for submissions are listed below.

[Go to the OPC website under *The Register*](#) for further submission and writing guidelines and considerations.

Send your articles, reviews, thoughts and ideas to ddina@principals.ca.

All submissions are subject to review and selection by the editorial committee.

Content Due	Edition Release
May 1	October
October 1	February
February 1	May

The Register is the proud recipient of the following awards:



Happenings at the OPC ...



President Ralph Nigro presented the Honorary Life Membership to Patsy Agard, our 2022–2023 Provincial President.



At our annual Awards Dinner in October 2023, we bestowed the OPC Outstanding Contribution to Education Award to Dr. David Tranter for his many years of work in mental and emotional health, well-being and student success.



We paid tribute to departing members of our 2022–2023 provincial executive (L-R) Leslie Mantle (Rainbow), Lorne Gretsinger (Niagara), Jason Pratt (Thames Valley) and Lisa Lamoureux (Near North).



We also honoured 8 Difference Makers from across the province. These people are selected by their local OPC associations. (L-R) Robyn Carnochan (Avon Maitland), Brent Coakwell (Halton), Nazneen Dindar (Durham), Simone Gravesande (Peel), Alison High (Grand Erie), Amy Johnson (Renfrew County), Carrie Pilgrim (Trillium Lakelands) and Jennifer Leishman (Rainy River – who was not in attendance).



Ongoing Learning

Supporting continuous growth and development

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provides a solid framework to guide professional goals and expectations for teachers' daily practice. Professional knowledge and ongoing professional learning are key standards that are central to the development of learning opportunities within the OPC to support the continuous growth and development of principals and vice-principals. Through a culturally responsive leadership and universal design lens, it is important to understand that adult learning must centre the learner, affirm diversity and incorporate broad input. The ability to provide choice in learning offerings and flexibility in how learning is structured helps to increase engagement and, ultimately, efficacy in school leadership.

Equitable and Inclusive Schools Additional Qualification Program

Our Professional Learning Team supports the development and facilitation of Additional Qualifications (AQs) that focus on enhancing the knowledge and

skills required for effective school leadership. In the fall of 2024, we are planning to offer a new AQ with a focus on the leadership perspective: *Equitable and Inclusive Schools for Administrators, Part 1*. The requirements of this program have recently been updated and are grounded in the foundations of anti-oppression, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, accessibility and learning for all. Our PL team is excited about the work ahead to develop a program that centres identity and diversity, and ultimately provides extended opportunities for critical self-reflection and practical strategies to create more equitable and inclusive spaces for students and staff.

Join Us in Conversation!

In the previous issue of *The Register*, the Leadership Talks podcast was introduced. We hope you will check out these authentic conversations with principals and vice-principals, where they share an aspect of leadership that brings them joy, passion and purpose. It has been rewarding to be a part of these conversations.

To date, featured topics include mental health, supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ staff, equity and mathematics. Check out our [Leadership Talks webpage](#) for full details on how to listen and be a part of the conversation!

Other Upcoming Learning Opportunities

A number of [AQ sessions](#) are available, and other upcoming learning opportunities include

[Monthly webinars](#)

- March 19 – Conflict Resolution and Navigating Challenging Relationships
- April 17 – Leading Anti-oppressive Work in Schools

[Collaborative Connections](#)

- March 26 – VP Perspectives Professional Learning Network (PLN)
 - April 24 – Equity Connections
- We look forward to hearing your feedback and input as we continuously plan for new learning that is responsive to Member and Associate needs. ▲

✉ learning@principals.ca

By Luther Brown

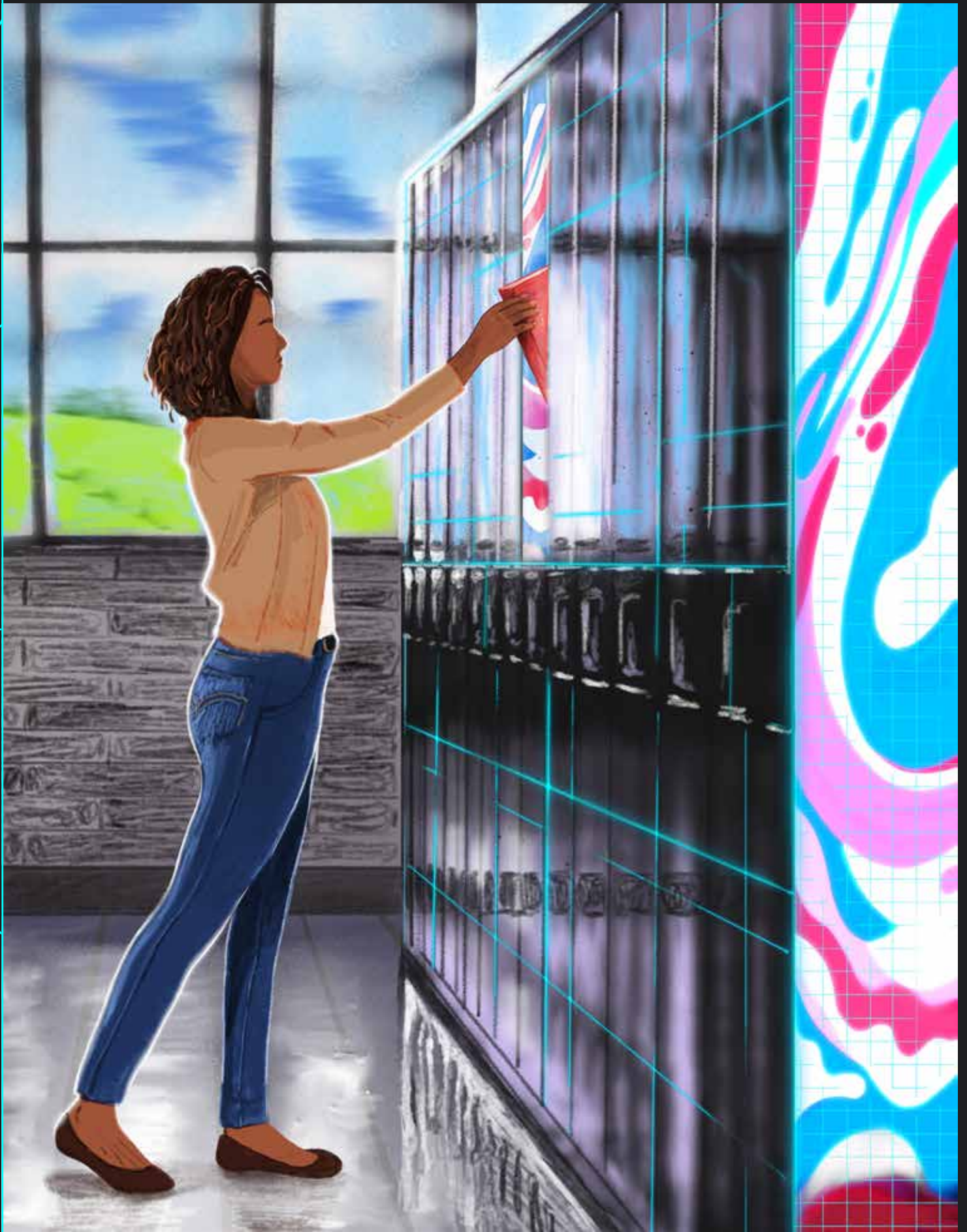
Illustration by Jeremy Leung

PRODUCING

**E Q U I T A B L E
S C H O O L I N G
O U T C O M E S**

Research looks at disparities in outcomes

I came to this research from my lived experience as a teacher from Jamaica, and my recognition of disparities in schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario. My teaching career here has been a journey in understanding and addressing this difference. This research is, therefore, contextualized within the historical patterns of schooling outcomes for Black students, and draws parallels with similar results in the United States and the United Kingdom.



I used the [Delphi technique](#) as the methodology of the research because it facilitated the engagement of Black youth as experts and encouraged their agency in generating data, and to make recommendations for change. The Delphi panel was comprised of six Black youth aged 18 to 24 who attended K–12 schools in Ontario – a composition that challenges the status quo regarding who carries expertise. The panel served as the collective authority over data generation.

Data from the research highlights the importance of acknowledging the interlocking oppressions that contribute to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes, and points to the need to advocate a shift in the narrative away from the term “achievement gap.” Instead, I propose the use of the phrase “production of inequitable schooling outcomes,” because it serves to focus on the systemic issues and structures that create disparities, rather than framing this outcome as a deficiency. This helps to shift the narrative away from the achievement gap, which operates in a binary relationship facilitating concepts of deficiency or superiority tied to race. The research argues that addressing these disparities is as important to the broader society as it is to the well-being of Black students. I engage a theoretical framework that is supported by Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory in Education as tools for addressing the impact of intersectionality and interlocking oppression on the production of inequitable schooling outcomes.

The panel called for the Ontario curriculum to be made racially inclusive, which requires policy, system and structural changes. Reimagining and changing systems and structures – especially ones that have been normalized or entrenched – requires the mitigation of power and power relations. These power relations and social positioning play out in the day-to-day production of schooling outcomes, and although our society affirms that all people are equal, it simultaneously fails to dismantle the structures, practices and systems that support the status quo race, power and gender-unequal relationships. Historically, education in North America has been aligned with the power and race structure; therefore, it is within this context of unequal power relations, and hegemonic social positioning, that inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students are produced.

The research identifies three significant contributors to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes that I would like to bring into focus, because they cannot be ignored in the work to eliminate the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. They are patriarchy, meritocracy and white supremacy. These constitute a formidable interlocking system of oppression, and are foundational to the systems, structures and practices of daily living and schooling here in North America. They are systemic, structural, ubiquitous and somewhat autonomous, and are everywhere together. They operate through common tools including curriculum,



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pedagogical practices, achievement standards, resource distribution and employment practices. They also function through elements in the determinative environment including socio-economic life, wealth distribution, health, housing and communication.

In trying to find ways to talk about and frame the production of racialized schooling outcomes, it became clear to me that race on its own is insufficient to capture the complex realities of the lived experience of Black people. Racialized lives are lived within a complex web of interlocking oppressions, and in a world where racism seems normal. White supremacy more succinctly frames the lived realities of Black people, and it is a dominant and embedded force in society that determines the rules of power and inequality along racial lines. It is a web of political, economic and cultural systems in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, and is underpinned by conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement. As a society, our organizing systems and structures, and our belief systems such as meritocracy, order, governance and access, are hardly perceived as patriarchal because these structures and practices appear normal.

Patriarchy in practice is a form of supremacy; it structures social interactions and individual rewards, and functions effectively as part of a team comprised of racism, white supremacy and neoliberalism. Patriarchy is ubiquitous, powerful and reliable. It sets up unequal relations of power, gender and race, which are deeply embedded in organizational practices and structures of society. The world around us reflects the organizing principles of patriarchy in action. Schools also reflect this hierarchical structure. Critical reflection on our lived experience helps us understand that patriarchy is a most powerful and enduring system of inequality, and that it is often missed because

it is a part of everything. It seems as normal as the wind: the effects are felt and seen, while it remains unseen. Our societal organizing systems and structures and our belief systems such as meritocracy, order, governance and access are hardly perceived as functions of patriarchy because these structures and practices appear “normal” – it’s just the way.

This reinforces for me that the already established analytical structures must be retooled to produce equitable schooling outcomes. Therefore, in order to address the phenomenon, the researcher, policy-maker, policy actor and change agents must use a lens that reflects the intersectionality of lived experience without subordinating racialized people.

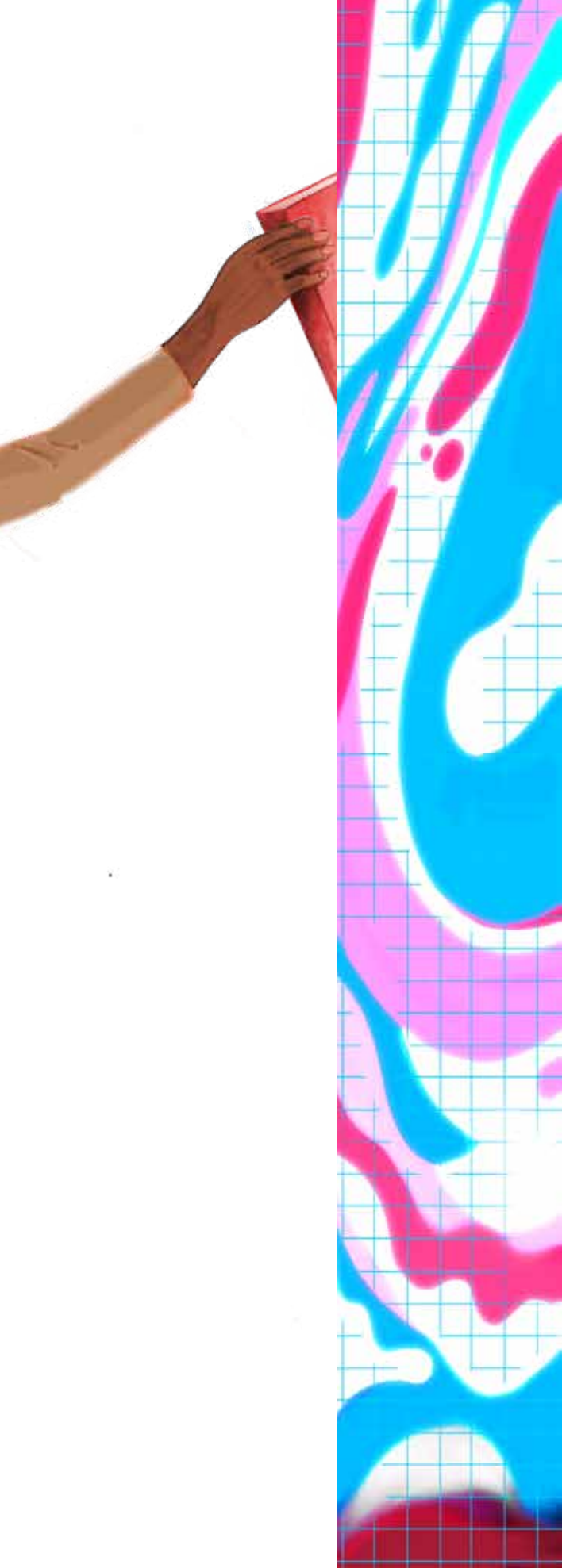
Meritocracy is a pillar of current schooling practices such as assessment and evaluation. This research supports the notion that achievement based on meritocracy is a flawed concept, as it excludes from the matrix of the production systems and structures of schooling outcomes major elements such as race, gender, wealth and health. In society, meritocracy structures power relations, and plays a key role in distributing economic and social justice, and social positioning. These are elements that each play important individual roles in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes and are quite impactful through their interlocking relationships within the umbrella of meritocracy.

From the standpoint of equitable schooling outcomes, I see meritocracy as problematic in a schooling practice because it frames how schooling professionals can think about and educate Black students. Meritocracy operates on a framework that ignores or discounts interconnected factors from the determinative environment that contributes to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. Its normalized use and acceptance in society helps to sustain the status quo.

Research Results

My research also considered the impact of the production of inequitable schooling outcomes on the life chances of Black students, and the significant negative implications of such schooling outcomes for Canada. It is one of many studies conducted regarding the production of inequitable schooling outcomes here in Canada. One difference between this research and previous studies is its engagement of Black youth as experts in a Delphi process to generate data and make recommendations for change.

The analysis and recommendations are grounded in the research data and reflect rigorous engagement of the relevant literature and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Panel responses reflected the intersectionality and interlocking characteristics embedded within the elements of the schooling production systems and structures. Connections were made between inequitable schooling outcomes and elements of the determinative environment such as school funding, socio-



economic conditions, discipline and punishment, assessment, evaluation, accountability, school leadership, teacher pedagogy and education policy.

It is generally agreed that school leadership plays a critical role in the production of schooling outcomes. It is problematic, therefore, that scant attention is paid to race and gender being central to contemplations regarding the role of school leadership in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. Such exclusion signals a level of unimportance attributed to race, gender and their intersectionalities in the matrix of possible solutions to the achievement gap.

Some key findings of the research include the necessity of:

1. ensuring culturally relevant pedagogical practices
2. prioritizing student wellness and belonging
3. ending academic streaming – engaging non-linear ways of progressing through schooling
4. teaching Black history year-round, using inclusive resources
5. funding programs that promote student success
6. rethinking and revising the practice of discipline and punishment in favour of a more student-centred approach
7. using an inclusive curriculum
8. having equitable distribution of and access to technology
9. ensuring equitable staffing
10. reimagining and reforming the roles of guidance and counselling to advance and support Black excellence, and to effectively eliminate stereotypes and other practices that perpetuate the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

In their response to the research question, *What change is required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools?* each panellist sent a letter to the Minister of Education with their recommendations:

1. Abolish and replace academic streaming.
2. Prioritize student belonging.
3. Use student-centred methods of conflict resolution.
4. Fund public schools for equitable schooling outcomes.
5. Make the Ontario curriculum racially inclusive.

Avenue for Further Research

My engagement of the data in light of theoretical and conceptual frameworks revealed that Black students with disabilities were excluded from the conversations about changing the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students. This omission from the panel revealed that as critical researchers, it is important that we centre the notion of ableism and its intersectionalities as attributes that must not be ignored in our work. One of my most significant

learnings from this research is that it did not specifically address the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students with disabilities. The exclusion also centres the need for research from a critical standpoint, specifically geared to meeting the schooling needs of Black students with disabilities.

When the term “Black student” is normalized to exclude Black students with disabilities from the conversation, it is problematic and is a form of erasure and obfuscation. It is noteworthy that the material gathered from the literature review tended to use umbrella terms such as “Black student,” “student,” and other such terms that do not overtly account for the occurrence of intersectionalities within the umbrella. It is also problematic when the accountability systems of the schooling production systems and structures are not held to account regarding their roles in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students. When researchers and other policy actors do not explicitly include accountability systems as important contributors to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students, the development of new knowledge to support the production of equitable schooling outcomes is stymied.

The research also comments on notions of Black Excellence and Joy, noting that the success of Black students is good not only for the individual students but also for their families, their communities and our society as a whole. Equitable schooling outcomes for Black students is Black excellence. It serves to produce joy. According to Dictionary.com (2022), “The term *Black excellence* refers to a high level of achievement, success, or ability demonstrated by an individual Black person or by Black people in general. ... Black excellence is often used in the same contexts and in similar ways as other positivity-focused terms like *Black joy*.” The processes engaged in this research showcased the excellence Black youth can bring to the knowledge creation table. The panellists generated high-quality data, which serves to identify the deficiency that exists when Black youth are excluded from official knowledge-making processes. Such

exclusion leads to the suppression of their points of view regarding changes to the production systems and structures that determine their life chances.

Conclusion

Responsible research benefits the participants, the community, research practice and society. One of my goals is to share the research widely so that it might be engaged in by the community, researchers, education leaders, policy-makers, politicians, the panel and others who influence change in education. *The Register* is one way to share this research broadly to directly engage education leaders and practitioners in Ontario and the wider society. I hope that, as consumers of research, you are encouraged to allow your professional practice as an individual or a group member to engage the critical agency, strategic activism and rigour required to persistently produce equitable schooling outcomes. ▲

This article is based on a dissertation titled [“If They Don't Offer You a Seat at The Table Bring a Folding Chair”: Schooling To Produce Equitable Outcomes For Black Students in Ontario Schools.](#)

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SCANT ATTENTION IS PAID TO RACE AND GENDER BEING CENTRAL TO CONTEMPLATIONS REGARDING THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE PRODUCTION OF INEQUITABLE SCHOOLING OUTCOMES.

School Board *Reporting Duties*

and the Ontario College of Teachers

A primer for principals and vice-principals





By the Protective Services Team*


Regardless of how long you've been a school leader, one of the most awkward situations you may face as a principal or vice-principal could be having to manage and share a concern about an Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) educator. The distinction between knowing what to report, to whom and when may be difficult to understand and thus requires clarification. Nevertheless, reporting obligations are a responsibility that comes with the territory. Being aware of the need for clear communication with your supervisory officer and the board is very important.

* This article is an updated version of one that was written by Joe Jamieson, former Deputy Registrar of the Ontario College of Teachers. Updated information has been taken directly from the OCT website.


A teacher in a publicly funded school in Ontario is, by definition, a member of the OCT. Provincial law requires that the OCT receives and investigates complaints against College members and investigates matters pertaining to discipline and fitness to practise. Those complaints may come from members of the public, members of the teaching profession, the Minister of Education or the College Registrar. In order for the College to investigate, the complaint must relate to alleged professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

When an employer notifies the College of a potential complaint, the College Registrar may initiate a complaint in the public interest. The *Ontario College of Teachers Act* (1996) (*OCTA*) compels employers – defined as the director of education/secretary of the board – to notify the College when certain employment circumstances arise that involve College members. Employers who employ a College member and either terminate, suspend or restrict their duties for reasons of professional misconduct must notify the College in writing within 30 days (Section 43.2, *OCTA*, 1996). A restriction of duty could include removing a teacher from an occasional teacher list, blocking a member from teaching specific grades or transferring a member to another school for disciplinary reasons. A termination could result from unsatisfactory teacher performance appraisals. The employer must report even if the OCT member resigns while the board is conducting an investigation or gathering evidence.

Boards must understand their obligations under the duty to report as well. In Sections 43.2 and 43.3 of the Act, when an employer files a report with the Registrar, the employer must at the same time provide the OCT member involved with a copy of the report. Any additional information that the employer provides to the Registrar to support the complaint must be provided to the member within 30 days. However, information pro-



When an employer files a report with the Registrar, the employer must at the same time provide the OCT member involved with a copy of the report.



vided to the OCT member may be redacted at the advice of the board's legal counsel.

Your Role as Principal/Vice-principal

A P/VP within a publicly funded school is not required to report employment matters directly to the College. However, P/VPs have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that the flow of information to the director of education complies with the Act. Subsection 43.2(1) of the Act states: "An employer of a member who terminates the member's employment or imposes restrictions on the member's duties for reasons of professional misconduct shall file with the Registrar within 30 days after the termination or restriction a written report setting out the reasons." The professional misconduct may be identified through your observations, supervision and documentation as a P/VP, and your concerns should be shared with your supervisory officer.

Although the process seems straightforward, living up to the requirements of this duty can be quite complex. When deciding to report, an employer must determine whether the board's disciplinary action occurred for reasons of professional misconduct. To determine what constitutes such misconduct, P/VPs need a working knowledge of the Professional Misconduct Regulation of the Act (O. Reg. 437/97), which can be found on the [College website](#).

There are 28 grounds in the Professional Misconduct Regulation, most of which were established when the College began operating in 1996. These grounds describe the activities that constitute professional misconduct within the meaning of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*. In November 2020, the College added the 28th ground, which recognizes hatred as a form of professional misconduct. Specifically, the Regulation describes this behaviour as "making remarks or engaging in behaviours that expose any person or class of persons to hatred on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination under Part I of the *Human Rights Code*."

Ordinarily, it may seem automatic that a board would report a College member's termination. But from the perspective of the College in adjudicating professional misconduct matters, it is the "why" that is important. Termination for reasons related solely to employment may not need to be reported. For instance, it is not necessary to report to the College if a teacher is habitually late for work and fails to heed warnings about punctuality. The behaviour in question does not contravene the Professional Misconduct Regulation. However, the board must report to the College when it terminates the employment of an OCT member for reasons such as fraud or assaulting a student. It is common practice, and expected, that P/VPs document teacher actions as necessary within school settings. As such, school administrators often become the catalysts of a chain of events.

When reporting restrictions on a member's duties to the College, the employer must first determine whether the decision to impose these restrictions arose from reasons of professional misconduct as outlined in the Professional Misconduct Regulation. For example, a P/VP who limits a new teacher from extracurricular coaching so that the individual can concentrate on classroom practice, need not be concerned about reporting to the College. Such a restriction would generally be considered appropriate supervision practice. However, a P/VP who restricts a new teacher from extracurricular coaching because the teacher has been alleged to have used physical force as a method of coaching, must advise their supervisory officer of this to allow the employer to determine next steps, along with reporting to the appropriate children's services agency. With the enactment of the *Child, Youth, and Family Services Act*, 2017 (*CYFSA*), reporting requirements became more stringent. The *CYFSA* requires that OCT members report suspicions of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and risk of harm to a Children's Aid Society.

Under the Professional Misconduct Regulation of the *OCTA*, College members can be found guilty of professional misconduct if they fail to comply with duties under the *CYFSA*. Employers who are aware or are made aware of a member's failure to make a report under the *CYFSA* are required to report that failure to act to the College (Section 43.2, *OCTA*).

Keep in mind that through the Act's reporting mechanisms, the employer is not filing a complaint directly with the College. The employer notifies the College, at which point the College Registrar determines whether to initiate a complaint against the member. The act of reporting does not automatically constitute a formal complaint. It is up to the board, as employer, to write to the Registrar and provide the name of the member with whom it has a concern, as well as details of the incident(s) or event(s) and whether the member's employment status has changed as a result. The College's Investigation Committee then reviews the complaint. During the course of such an investigation, a P/VP may be called by a College investigator for further information.

Depending on the information it receives, the Investigation Committee may decide to

- refuse to investigate some or all allegations in a complaint
- take no further action
- issue a written reminder or advice to the member
- require the member to complete remedial training or education
- caution or admonish the member in writing or in person
- refer the matter in whole or in part to the College's Discipline Committee for a hearing (in cases of incompetence or professional misconduct)
- refer the matter in whole or in part to the Fitness to Practise Committee for a hearing (if the information indicates that health-



The employer may be required to share information with College staff, even information that would otherwise be protected by Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.

Employers are often reluctant to share personal information about a member, especially if it is health related. However, the *Act* directs that the employer may be required to share information with College staff, even information that would otherwise be protected by Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation. Duty to report potential misconduct is a serious responsibility.

Duty to Self-report Criminal Offences

Occasionally, OCT members may face situations in which they have been charged with a criminal offence. As members of the College, they must now self-report these charges. In December 2020, new reporting obligations took effect when the *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020*, amended the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* to include new reporting obligations for College members for (1) offences and (2) charges, bail conditions or other restrictions.

The *Ontario College of Teachers Act* (Sections 51.1, 51.2) requires College members to report to the College in writing

- if they have been found guilty of an offence and
- if they have been charged with an offence, and the report shall include information about every bail condition or other restriction imposed on, or agreed to by, the member in connection with the charge.

College members must file a report in writing with the Registrar if they have been found guilty of an offence. The report shall be filed as soon as reasonably practicable after the member has received notice of the finding of guilt.

Failure to comply with these reporting obligations may be considered to be professional misconduct.

The College is required to post on the public register current or previous criminal proceedings involving a member that are relevant to their membership, including any undertakings of the member in relation to the proceeding. The public register must also contain any restrictions imposed on a member's eligibility to teach by an order of a court or other lawful authority, including the name and location of the court or authority and the date the order was made.

The reporting obligations noted above are required for all offences, charges, bail conditions or restrictions in any jurisdiction, including offences under the *Criminal Code of Canada*, *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and provincial laws. However, members do not need to report offences under the *Highway Traffic Act* (e.g., speeding tickets, parking tickets or municipal by-law infractions).

These reporting obligations cover the entire time period of membership with the College. If a member was charged with an

related issues may be affecting the member's ability to teach)

- conduct medical inquiries in cases where a member may be incapacitated
- adopt an Undertaking to Resign and Never to Reapply, or
- adopt an Undertaking to Resolve a Teacher Performance Appraisal complaint.

The Investigation Committee panel's written decision is sent to the member, the public complainant or the reporting employer, and the member's current employer (if different from the reporting employer).



offence but subsequently found not guilty of the offence prior to December 2020, the member is not required to report the charge.

Should a P/VP become aware of an OCT member facing charges, it is important to encourage the member to contact their union or association for advice and support, if they have not done so already. Of course, if the P/VP is the one facing charges, they should also take this step.

Who Should Report?

As P/VP of your school, you are not required to make direct reports to the College of Teachers for other OCT members. You do, however, have the responsibility to ensure that details of potential reportable events and the identification of the OCT member involved are communicated to your supervisory officer so that the reporting decision can be made at the board level. As part of your

statutory duties to the Employer Board, you are responsible under Section 265 (i) of the *Education Act* to report “matter[s] affecting the school” and to seek direction from your supervisory officer.

Principals and vice-principals are responsible for reporting information to their employers that may result in a report to the College. Make sure you have a good grounding in the legislative requirements, and when in doubt, contact the OPC Protective Services Team or the College of Teachers for guidance. ▲

✉ asayed@principals.ca

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- Ontario College of Teachers Act*, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 12
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/96o12>
Duty to Report: Professional Advisory <https://www.oct.ca/resources/advisories/duty-to-report>
O. Reg. 437/97: Professional Misconduct <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/970437>

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CULTIVATING
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Five principles for school principals

By John L. Vitale

Illustration by Lynn Scurfield



The future of the teaching profession relies on the recruitment and training of new teachers. The experiences that teacher candidates face in the pre-service classroom, however, substantially influence whether or not said candidates choose to stay in the profession. The primary purpose of this article is to provide school principals with an opportunity to reflect upon the responsibility that is placed upon them when teacher candidates are teaching within their schools. Specifically, five principles will be discussed:

- 1. selecting an appropriate mentor teacher**
- 2. the formal acknowledgment**
- 3. teacher candidate progression**
- 4. policies and procedures**
- 5. culmination.**

As a teacher educator, one of my principal objectives is to cultivate a deep and profound sense of curiosity about the entire educational process. In addition, it is my mandate to help foster a new generation of teaching candidates (TCs) who recognize the importance and honour of their chosen profession. This mandate is easier said than done, as the past decade of teacher education in Ontario has been interesting and intriguing to say the least. Economic challenges, political turmoil, program change, job scarcity and a global pandemic have adversely affected teacher education across the province.

Teacher training programs are twofold. First, there is the theoretical aspect, for which, as a faculty member, I am in part responsible. Teacher candidates take a wide

array of courses, including, but not limited to, educational history, philosophy and law; lesson planning; pedagogical theory; and curriculum-specific theory. Second, there is the practical side of the program, where TCs teach under the supervision of a mentor teacher (MT) in a government-sanctioned school. Both parts of the program must be successfully completed for TCs to be certified.

When it comes to practicum placements, faculties of education partner with school districts throughout Ontario. Our responsibility is to facilitate 19 weeks of placement opportunities over a two-year period. Specific practicum placements average between three to four weeks each, and TCs are ultimately evaluated by a MT based on a series of guidelines designed by the education faculty. These practicum place-

ments are critically important experiences that substantially influence whether or not TCs choose to stay in the profession. It is somewhat rare for TCs to struggle with the theoretical segment of the program. After all, TCs have already completed an undergraduate degree with good to exceptional grades. It is, however, common for many TCs to experience struggles within the practical segment, as many of them have no classroom experience. This is where the school principal comes in – another mentor figure within the school, over and above the MT.

Although there are plenty of principles and guidelines for MTs, there are few, if any, for school principals. To address this void, the purpose of my article aims to clarify the school principal's responsibilities concerning TCs via five guiding principles.

“

EXPERIENCE WITHOUT
THEORY IS BLIND,
BUT THEORY WITHOUT
EXPERIENCE IS MERE
**INTELLECTUAL
PLAY.** ”

”

Immanuel Kant

PRINCIPLE #1

Select an Appropriate Mentor Teacher

Every faculty of education has a minimum set of requirements for MTs. As a faculty advisor, I can assure you that many of the MTs I have encountered do not meet these requirements. It is important that Mentor teachers be experienced, engaged and meet the criteria set out by the faculty. This type of situation creates a very volatile and discordant learning environment for the TC. Principals should discourage teachers, who may not yet be ready, from taking on this role. Furthermore, principals should spend some time with the MT carefully going over protocols, procedures and etiquette when dealing with TCs. I can remember one situation where the school principal insisted that a specific staff member (who was a struggling teacher) take on a TC. The rationale behind this scenario was that the struggling teacher would improve his practice by being accountable as a MT. Although there are indeed benefits of being a MT (through rethinking and reflection of pedagogical practice), the primary purpose of said teacher must always be the improvement and well-being of the TC. They need support and guidance that only an experienced and well-respected MT can provide.

Students in faculties of education across the province are culturally and linguistically diverse; hence it is critically important that mentors embrace TCs in a culturally responsive manner that is rooted in empathy, understanding and appreciation. On a larger scale, it is crucial that all TCs are sincerely welcomed by



the entire school community in a culturally responsive manner. In sum, school communities should focus on the benefits and assets that TCs bring to the classroom, rather than any perceived limitations.

PRINCIPLE #2
**Formally Acknowledge
the Teacher Candidate**

Through student reflections, class discussions and site visits, I am amazed at how many TCs have not met the school principal during their practicum. It is critically important for school principals to welcome and formally acknowledge every TC, and even invite them to participate in extracurricular opportunities and/or school events. This helps to build community and strengthen relationships within the school while simultaneously introducing the TC to the overall culture of the school. More importantly, it helps to validate and substantiate the practicum placement for the TC.

In addition, the school principal has an opportunity to provide essential information about school policies and procedures by wel-

coming and formally acknowledging the TC, which can help to avoid potentially awkward and uncomfortable situations. For example, one of our TCs was considered to be a potential trespasser and had to identify himself as a TC to the school principal. This was an embarrassing moment for the school principal, and a very negative and non-welcoming experience for the TC.

As a faculty advisor who occasionally checks up on TCs during practicum, it is apparent which schools roll out the welcome mat, and which schools see TCs as just an additional responsibility. I am sure that TCs have the same perceptions. In fact, what I have noticed over the years is a direct correlation between the level of hospitality a school provides and the success of the TC. When a culture of warmth and hospitality usually permeates the entire school, the TC benefits. Conversely, a culture of apathy and unkindness produces negative experiences for TCs. At the end of the day, every school should represent the very spirit of teaching and learning to the highest degree possible. Given that TCs are new inductees to the pro-





**ECONOMIC CHALLENGES,
POLITICAL TURMOIL,
PROGRAM CHANGE, JOB
SCARCITY AND A GLOBAL
PANDEMIC HAVE ADVERSELY
AFFECTED TEACHER
EDUCATION ACROSS THE
PROVINCE.**



fession, a climate of warmth, friendliness and enthusiasm should imbue the TC’s experiences. Such a climate lies clearly under the umbrella of the school principal.

PRINCIPLE #3

**Check on Teacher Candidate's
Progression**

At some point, the school principal should be asking the MT how the TC is progressing. Such dialogue is an important part of the TC’s overall success. In addition, the principal should make sure that the MT is allowing the TC to teach in the candidate’s own style, teach in the candidate’s own style, as opposed to that of the MT. The entire practicum should not be an opportunity to let the TC take over completely. This is why a follow-up with the TC (to address any needs or concerns) is critically important. If everything is going well, such a follow-up may simply be used to praise the candidate, which goes a long way in building their confidence and self-esteem. I can remember one TC telling me that she was called down to the principal’s office at the end of her first week of practicum. Fearing the worst, she was surprised to find out the principal simply wanted to know how she liked the school and how things were going in the classroom. Clearly, this is an example of a school principal who was creating a warm and welcoming school culture.

Furthermore, some principals may wish to examine a TC’s lesson plans and even choose to sit in on a lesson as an opportunity to provide feedback and help. Ultimately, the TC needs to know that the leader of the school is taking an avid interest in them over and above the initial “hello and welcome to our school.” Such practice goes a long way to en-



sure the improvement and continued success of our teaching candidates.

PRINCIPLE #4

Clarify Policies and Procedures

It is important that school principals are aware of the template that the MT will be using to evaluate the TC. This will ensure

that the evaluation will be conducted in a fair and professional manner. Moreover, it is equally important to understand what kind of support the university provides. Is a faculty advisor assigned to the TC? If yes, what role does the faculty advisor play? What are the university procedures if the TC needs a form of intervention or discipline? Is the TC affiliated with a teaching federation or union? These are important administrative details for the school principal that allow for quick and fair remediation.

PRINCIPLE #5

Create a Culminating Moment

All TCs need a formal farewell from their practicum experience, and the school principal should play a prominent role in this regard. A formal farewell provides a culminating moment for the TC, which becomes a springboard for pedagogic improvement. In addition, a formal farewell makes the TC feel like an important part of the school community. After all, strengthening and building community is an important mandate for all school principals. In fact, some of my TCs received thank-you cards from school principals. Such cards become physical reminders of the practicum experience at a specific school, and often become part of the TC's portfolio. Affirmation is one of the most effective tools to motivate and inspire students at all levels, especially TCs. Moreover, this is also an opportunity for the school principal to provide advice on looking for employment, which TCs really appreciate. Thank-you cards also help build a relationship between the school principal and the TC.



Conclusion

I fully recognize the multitude of responsibilities that an average school principal faces on a daily basis. Given this, the welfare and well-being of TCs often get overlooked, particularly when they are under the day-to-day supervision of the MT. I contend,



AFFIRMATION IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOLS TO MOTIVATE AND INSPIRE STUDENTS AT ALL LEVELS, ESPECIALLY TCs.

however, that the future of this great profession is directly tied to the training and treatment TCs receive. Although I am not absolving teacher educators from this responsibility, school principals must be aware that practicum experiences, which average anywhere from 18 to 20 weeks during a two-year teacher training program, are essentially void

of contact with the faculty of education other than a visit by the faculty advisor. Hence, the MT and school play a very large role in the training and treatment of our TCs. As school leaders, principals are keenly instrumental in facilitating an environment for TCs to prosper and flourish. In sum, the most authentic and critical learning opportunities for every

TC happens in the classroom, directly under the school principal's watch. ▲

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DREAMING WITH YOUR EYES

WIDE
OPEN

The benefits of post-secondary learning are numerous and beneficial to all

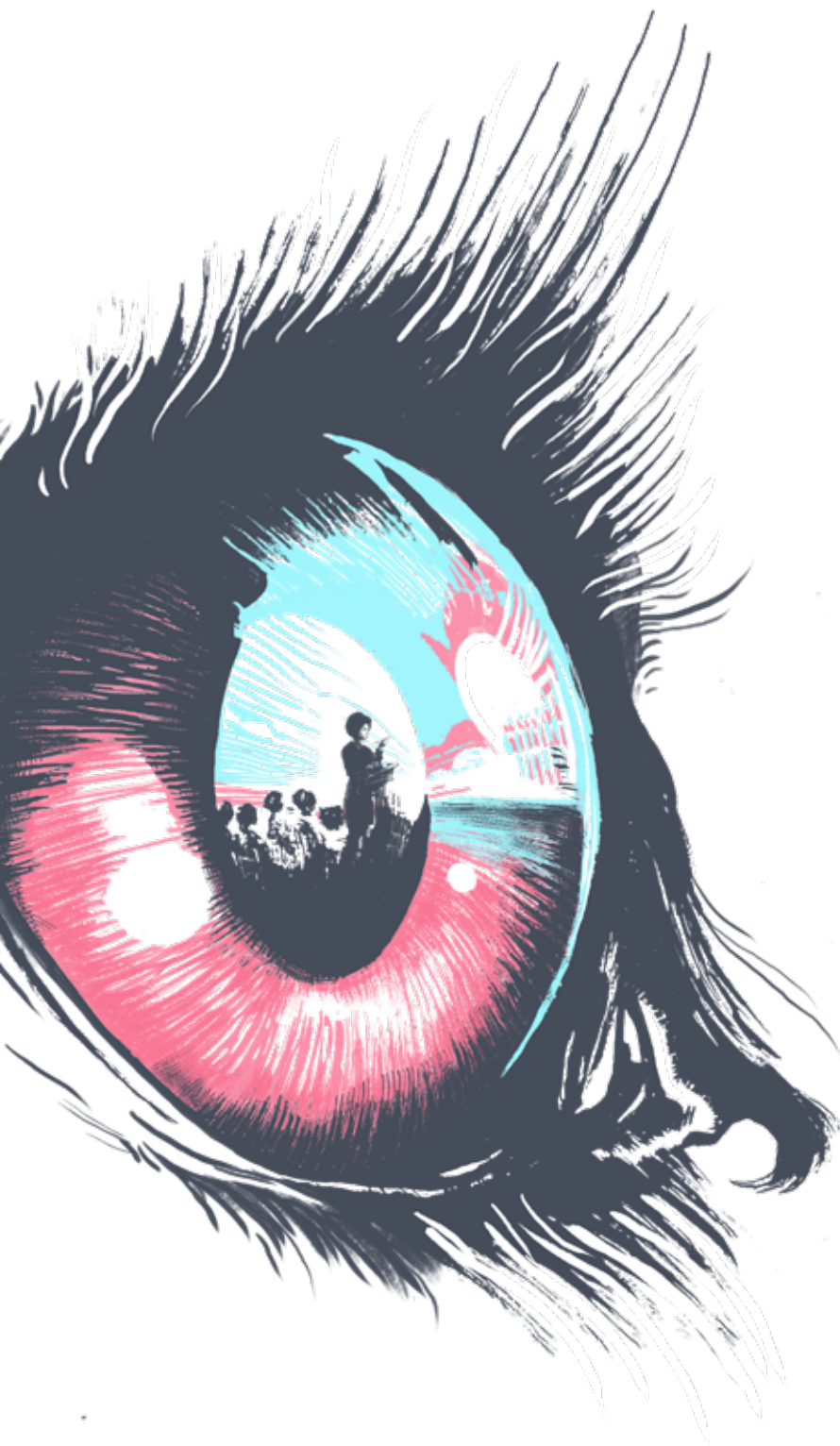
By Janet Morrison

Illustration by Aaron McConomy

Supporting learners, fuelling their aspirations and celebrating their successes have been my professional passion and meta-focus for over 30 years. I started as a front-line staff member and part-time faculty member. Over time, I worked my way up through progressively senior positions at colleges and universities in Canada and the United States. Today, I have the privilege of leading a public college in Ontario that is the envy of our sector, supervising a team of educators, administrators and support staff who do amazing work – sometimes under incredibly difficult circumstances.

Our heavily regulated ‘public’ institution receives less than 25 per cent of its revenue from government. Our work relies on financial resources and human talent, neither of which are plentiful as we navigate economic uncertainty and a war for talent.

An array of research affirms that a majority of Ontario’s post-secondary students meet the criteria for a mental health diagnosis, and that more than half experience debilitating anxiety and/or are too depressed to fully function. The National College Health Assessment has found that more than 10 per cent of college and university students have contemplated suicide, and that about two per cent have made a serious attempt over the 12 months preceding the study. A significant number of our learners have a disability that requires accommodation, and yet we receive limited additional funding to deliver what is



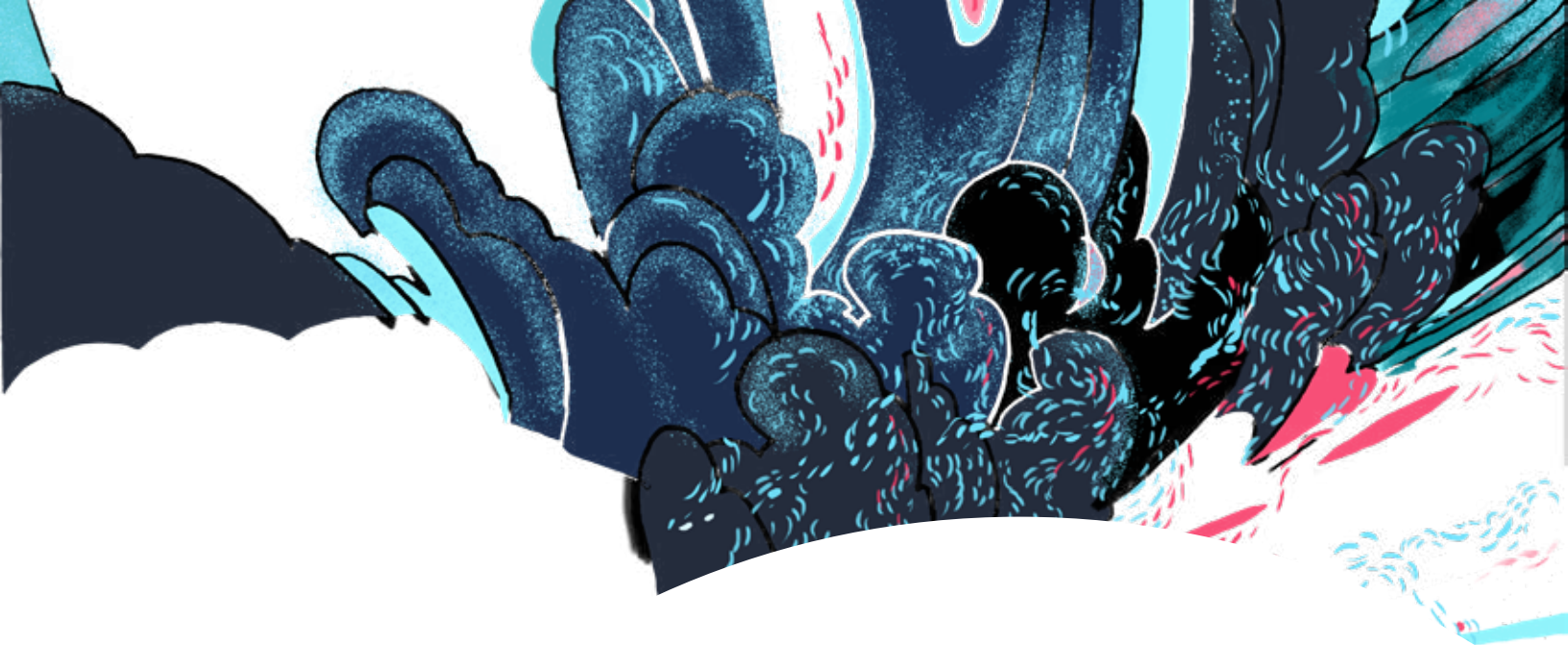
morally, ethically and legally requisite. The faculty collegium in Ontario is aging, and the tension between student expectations and legacy approaches to teaching are being overtly challenged – and rightly so. Issues of colonialism, racism, systemic bias, homophobia, Islamophobia, transphobia, injustice and ignorance demand the best of my leadership capacity. Looking to recent headlines, many of my students have lived experience with violence and too few have the tools to cope with or find resolution through alternative means.

In the face of very real challenges, however, I am resolved to staying focused on a brilliant, sustainable source of light. Simply: I believe in the transformative power of post-secondary education, and I am proud to be an educator in 2024 because I've never felt more strongly about the impact of our work. I believe that education is fundamental to Canada's future as a safe, progressive, economically secure, sustainable, inclusive and equitable democracy. This view was eloquently expressed 25 ago by Sheridan College's fourth president, Sheldon Levy, who said:

“Education is not a competing public priority – it is THE public priority. All other priorities rely on great education. At colleges and universities, we train the teachers. We train the early childhood educators. We train the nurses, the doctors, the therapists and the technicians. We prepare students to lead in our hi-tech world. We teach communications, design, computing and environmental technology. We coach the poets, artists and musicians. We train the entrepreneurs and the engineers. And then we ask those we trained to come and teach the next generation.”

The positioning of higher learning as fundamental to the fabric of our national identity is not new. It has, however, been under threat as the world becomes increasingly volatile, uncertain and ambiguous. Specifically, industry leaders have argued that the return on investment from earning a degree, diploma or certificate is no longer sufficient. I respectfully disagree. Drawing on my decades of experience, I can tell you that post-secondary education matters now more than ever. In 2017, the president of Harvard University, Lawrence Bacow, said that “higher education is a public good ... and beyond that, a pillar of our democracy that, if dislodged, will change [us] into something fundamentally **bleaker and smaller.**”

The public value of post-secondary education is affirmed every day by alumni who honour me with stories about how



it transformed their lives and the lives of those around them. They inspire me and give credence to the arguments made by McMahon in his book *Higher Learning, Greater Good: The private and social benefits of higher education*. Essentially, his work speaks to the quantification of the combined public and private benefits of a college education, particularly in the face of complexity. Let me speak to each in turn.

Undeniably, the rate of economic return on post-secondary education (that is, the net worth of education once costs like tuition, textbooks and foregone income are considered) is significant and has continued to rise over the past decades. A 20-year analysis of cumulative earnings of post-secondary graduates released by Statistics Canada in 2019 found that college graduates earn about 1.3-1.4 times more than their counterparts with a secondary school diploma. This is an enormous piece of the investment value proposition, particularly for learners and/or families looking to break the cycle of poverty.

But measuring only the economic benefits degrades the true value proposition of earning a degree, diploma or certificate.

This myopic approach places too much focus on the **personal, market outcomes** of earning a post-secondary credential. In tandem, we must think about the bigger picture, or what McMahon refers to as the **social, non-market** outcomes that are achieved or advanced by going to college or university. What does McMahon mean by 'non-market' outcomes? They include the role that our institutions play in making students healthier, more engaged and conscious citizens. These effects last a lifetime and have a tremendous impact on society at large. Done right, the curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular demands inherent to earning a post-secondary credential transform learners and, by extension, families, communities and the planet. I personally invested 11 years as a post-secondary learner in Canada and the United States; over that time, I earned four degrees. The outcomes I value most, however, are incalculable: university gave me a voice, taught me to think and compelled me to engage. It appears simplistic, but the process of earning my academic credentials inspired who I am, not what I do.

Because it matters, I'm always mindful to acknowledge my privilege. I am a 53-year-old, white, straight, cisgender woman who was born in Canada. For three generations, my family have been settlers on this land. My family of origin speaks English. I do not have a disability. My parents and grandparents always had enough money to meet our needs. I can talk openly about my partner. I can easily use public buildings and transportation, and I've had access to a car since I learned to drive. I don't worry about not being hired because of my appearance or the colour of my skin; I don't need to hide, change or minimize parts of my identity to reduce the chances of mistreatment. I am, in summary, a person of immense, unearned privilege. Growing up, my brothers and I were expected to attend college or university, in part because my parents and grandparents went before

I believe that education is fundamental to Canada's future as a **safe, progressive, economically secure, sustainable, inclusive and equitable democracy.**

Creativity is an “idea engine” that enables people to experiment and drive change, even after what we know has been exhausted.



me. I didn't work during my undergraduate studies, and I lived on campus.

Socio-economic status, marginalization and obstacles to student success intersect and must be overtly acknowledged. Many of the students I've had the privilege to support do not fit my profile. They work 25 hours a week or more, commute over two hours a day, have partners, dependents and debt. For them, getting a good job and earning more money is the primary objective of doing more schooling. I understand, admire and respect that.

The literature is clear, however: even after accounting for confounding influences like race, gender, parental income and prior health status, attending college or university has a positive impact on values, attitudes and quality of life. Evidence further suggests that the influence of post-secondary education extends beyond individual graduates to their children. What does that mean in practical terms? College and university graduates score higher on measures of tolerance, have a lower propensity to commit crime, and are more likely to vote, volunteer, participate in public debate and read to their kids. They have a greater propensity to trust and tolerate others, are less likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours like heavy drinking, illicit drug use or smoking. They're more likely to engage in preventative health care and healthy behaviours, and they cope with distress more effectively. Without question, graduating from a college or university drives positive behaviours that make the world better. Back to President Bacow's address: post-secondary education counters the threat of becoming smaller and bleaker with an influx of hope and opportunity, not just for learners but for

society. For this very reason, I describe the opportunity to lead at Sheridan as an immense privilege; it's also where I find energy in the face of formidable challenges.

But personal transformation doesn't just happen. It is carefully, purposefully architected by compelling learning environments and inspired educators. It's best fuelled by curriculum and pedagogy that is thoughtful, responsive and prescient. In that spirit, and as the world contemplates its recovery from the economic and social consequences of COVID-19, it's becoming increasingly clear that the new economy will demand an evolved set of core competencies.

In a 2020 McKinsey & Company survey of 200 executives, 90 per cent reported – not surprisingly – that they believe the pandemic will fundamentally change the way they do business over the next five years. Specifically, Bar Am, Furstenthal, Jorge and Roth (2020) argued that companies would have to adapt and reinforce their innovation portfolios to remain competitive. On a related note, a report by the World Economic Forum (2020) identified the following top requisite skills by 2025: analytical thinking and innovation; ability to learn; complex problem solving; critical thinking; and creativity, originality and initiative.

I believe the most potent of those competencies is creativity. Back in 2010, IBM's Global CEO Study identified creativity as the top skill required to navigate an increasingly complex world and overcome massive shifts that are affecting business. Similarly, the World Economic Forum in 2020 forecasted the importance of this skill. It would be impossible to fathom that those demands have decreased over recent years as our world has become increasingly volatile and uncertain. But what is creativity, and can it be taught?

Some see creativity in manifest form – as visual art on a canvas or performance art on a stage. Certainly, as the president of

Canada's largest art school, I appreciate that lens. The definition I embrace, however, goes beyond that, describing creativity as a learned skill that opens the mind and has the potential to galvanize inclusive, tolerant and peaceful societies. Creativity is foundational to innovation, which can be defined as exploiting a novelty for business value. Creativity can invigorate problem solving, and inspire new ways of cultivating, organizing and expressing knowledge. Creativity is an "idea engine" that enables people to experiment and drive change, even after what we know has been exhausted. Best of all? Creativity is learned and sustainable. In his book *The Creative Class and Economic Development*, Richard Florida notes that creativity is "an unlimited resource that is constantly renewed and improved by education, on-the-job experience, and the stimulation that is provided by human interaction." This argument challenges the widely held belief that creativity is innate. While that may be the case for some, creativity can also, without question, be learned – through formal educational environments or through curation, practice and lived experience.

I'm proud to lead at a globally celebrated institution renowned for an ethos of creativity – but also for a track record in trailblazing. One of our vanguard programs is animation.

In his book *Planet Canada*, John Stackhouse discusses our program and references James Cameron, who was born in Kapuskasing, Ontario, and worked with multiple Sheridan alumni on ground-breaking films like *Terminator 2*, *Aliens* and *Titanic*. Cameron concluded that it was Canadian to "dream with your eyes wide open." That, I would argue, is what creativity means – and it must be our calling. Collectively, we need to embrace and cultivate it across the learning continuum, for the benefit of our students and their families, communities and society. Inspired and exemplary leadership in public education calls for nothing less. ▲

Dr. Janet Morrison, PhD, is the president and vice-chancellor of Sheridan College in the Greater Toronto Area..

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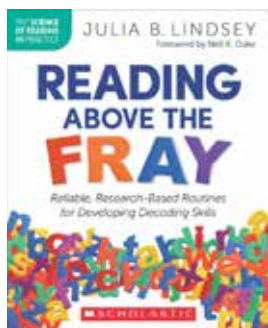
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Reading Above the Fray

By Julia B. Lindsey
 Scholastic Professional, New York
 ISBN: 978-1-33882-872-6
 Reviewed by Melissa Murray

With a new language curriculum dominating many professional learning conversations, and many questions specifically around Strand B: the Foundations of Language, *Reading Above the Fray* is an excellent resource to help elementary

administrators learn about evidence-based reading instruction (a.k.a. the foundations of reading) in an easily digestible and engaging way.

The book, by reading researcher and former elementary teacher Julia B. Lindsey, is anchored by current research. Beginning with an overview of reading models, the book then moves into an examination of each of the elements of decoding, before ending with some thoughts on the role of fluency in reading.

The inclusion of current, evidence-based research begins almost immediately as the author explores a new model of reading, the Active View of Reading (2021). This model expands on Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) to include an understanding that language comprehension includes cultural and other knowledge, honouring and affirming the lived experiences that children bring when engaging with a text. This model also notes the role that motivation and engagement play in reading, as well as the executive functioning skills that reading demands. Combined with word recognition and language com-

prehension, the Active View of Reading presents a much more holistic approach to how we learn to read.

In the book, the author uses a different chapter to explore each of the elements of decoding text:

- oral language and vocabulary
- print concepts
- phonemic awareness
- alphabet knowledge and
- sound-spelling knowledge.

In each of these chapters, Lindsey explains in clear language what the element is, and offers insight into what it would look like in instruction. She then offers a small shift in practice that teachers can make to start embedding evidence-based reading practices in their classroom. These small steps are explained, and at the end of each chapter, Lindsey offers a note on how to bring together each of the ideas explored thus far.

What makes Lindsey's book so helpful is the **why** that is included in every chapter: the research. Knowing that the information or practice being discussed is anchored in published research helps educators to be more confident in their

instructional choices, something that I think we haven't always had in the past, but that we are now seeking.

For a number of educators, the shift to evidence-based reading instruction will require an understanding that we were trained to teach reading in a certain way that may not have been effective for all students. We can commit to doing better – because now we know better. *Reading Above the Fray* is the gentle “guide on the side” helping us to understand what the research about teaching reading actually says, and inviting us to make small shifts to our teaching practice to ensure that every learner is a reader.

Lindsey takes this complex process of teaching reading and breaks it down into manageable pieces, allowing us to enhance our own understanding of evidence-based reading instruction so that we can support our staff as they adapt and evolve how they teach reading. Sometimes the volume of information about teaching reading can seem overwhelming; Lindsey's book helps us to focus on key elements of reading instruction, allowing us to move “beyond the fray.” ▲

Melissa Murray is the principal of Fairwood Public School in the York Region District School Board.

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Human Connections

Opening our eyes and hearts to the promise of change

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”
– Maya Angelou

It was liberating for me to spend two years working as an assistant language teacher (ALT) in Japan, travelling and volunteering in different global communities. I immersed myself in this new culture that embraced me with open arms. Returning to Canada, I began working as a science and math teacher in Durham Region, where I had attended public school as a young Black girl in the early 1980s. Several years into my career, I reconnected with my godson, who at the time was having some struggles at school and home. That turned into a three-year foster relationship. How joyous this time was in my life, to watch this boy grow into a young man full of potential and curiosity.

Navigating the system as both an educator and a caregiver revealed both the promise and the darkness of an institution plagued with inequity.

Once high school arrived, my godson returned to his home to develop his academic and athletic pursuits. Like most adolescents, this was a difficult time for him socially. He was not immune to this reality and, sadly, became disenfranchised with school. When he did not find a place of belonging in the classroom, he found it in a community that welcomed him but was not on the path of greatness that he was. In February 2017, he was shot and killed during a home invasion. The murder remains unsolved to this day. His memory lives in me each day.

Two years later, I would be called to serve in another way. A colleague had been working with a young man who was leaving his foster home after nine years. Timing was such that I had space available in my home to offer this young man the support and

stability that he needed. Five years later, we are still together, working toward his greatness. We have had many successes over the years, including his graduation with a high school diploma, the first in his family. He has become part of our family and I am grateful for his life every day. He affectionately refers to me as “Mom” – an honour that I do not take for granted.

As a system and school leader, I am guided in my work by my lived reality. I see the good in people and only want the best for every student that I meet. Experiential learning gave me the perspective of the importance of human connection and all that it offers when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to receive its gifts. I remain optimistic and open-minded to the promise of what education can do to change the outcome of someone’s life. ▲

Eleanor McIntosh is the principal of Pickering High School in the Durham District School Board.

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