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OPC Register

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Strategic Planning

Prioritizing our next steps



The year 2018 is what those in the sports world might refer to as a TSN turning point for the OPC. We are celebrating 20 years as a vibrant, Member-centred association that has cultivated a reputation for expert and empathetic

individual Member support. Our issue advocacy is student-centred, professional and relationship-based as we engage with our education stakeholders and the Ministry of Education. We've nurtured and grown a professional learning expertise within the province, in Canada and abroad. As we celebrate the past, it's the perfect time to look to the future and consider how we want the next 20 years to look. That's both a responsibility and opportunity that we've determined we won't take lightly.

The education sector is a complex and constantly evolving enterprise. There are few other sectors that attract the same degree of legislative change and ministry initiatives, all in the con-

text of serving a diverse student population whose needs change and evolve as society changes. To assess our place in this enterprise – how we can best maximize the opportunities and mitigate the challenges that are just around the corner – we've embarked on an almost year-long strategic planning project that will culminate in the Spring of 2019. The product of this project will be our first comprehensive strategic plan, a plan that over the next three to five year horizon will ensure that our actions and resources are fully aligned with, and relevant to, our priorities. We've retained the assistance of experts in this field from The Portage Group, who will guide and frankly push us

out of our comfort zone as we examine what we've done well and should keep doing as well as what needs to change so we can thrive in the future.

Our strategic planning project has been designed to maximize engagement with a particular emphasis on our Members, Local Leaders, Provincial Council and the Executive. We have already begun direct interviews, have an all-Member survey planned for this fall and will be conducting virtual town hall sessions. Our staff have been meeting and will continue to meet to share their reflections and ideas. We've also reached out to external "thought leaders" in education, through oral and written interviews, to ask for their views about the OPC. Not only are we seeking input from within our sector, but outside of it as well. As a voluntary non-profit association, we are canvassing best practices of similarly situated organizations in other sectors.

As we move through this process, we will be working together to outline a short list of targeted priorities that are aligned with Member needs and expectations. We'll define and then test these priorities over the next several months by asking you for your input and feedback. Ultimately, our association priorities will be articulated with corresponding measurable objectives and we'll use metrics to evaluate how and whether we are meeting our key priorities.

Of course, the timing of our strategic planning process also corresponds with

a change in provincial government. We have spent the past 15 years building relationships and working collaboratively on projects with the former government. While there were occasions when we disagreed on specific policies and initiatives, we usually found ways to move forward together. As a political but non-partisan association, we're now in the very early stages of relationship building with a new government. The reality that governments change epitomizes why we must continue to stay nimble and focused on our key priorities – priorities don't change because of elections, but the way we pursue them may require new approaches. This strategic planning process will also assist us with that preparation.

Despite our focus on change, let me be clear that this process is not about "change for change sake." We know that Member service is at the core of what we do and who we are. Our commitment to Members and the students we all serve will not change. Rather, this process represents our chance to ask ourselves how we can continue to best serve you going forward. ▲



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Letters to the editor and submissions on topics of interest to the profession are welcome.

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The Register is the proud recipient of the following awards:



Happenings at OPC ...



Past-President Mary Linton presents a cheque for \$15,000 from OPC to Lori Smith (left), National Director and Scott Sandison (right), Director, Community Engagement of Right To Play including funds raised through our Provincial Council Silent Auction.



In July we welcomed our 2018-19 Provincial President, Larry O'Malley from the Halton District School Board.



This summer the OPC hosted several educational events. The International School Leadership (ISL) held workshop sessions with educational leaders from Denmark (above left). In July we held our annual AQ Boot Camp with training in Education Law in Toronto and Special Education for Administrators in Peel (above right). In August we held the AQ Facilitator Innovation Camp (bottom left) and the Mentor-Coaching Institute (bottom right).





Inclusivity

Language matters

As early as Kindergarten, we teach students inclusivity: don't leave your peers out, include them in games, groups

and teams. Inclusion is an integral part of society, commonly learned in schools. How can schools ensure they are promoting and encouraging inclusivity?

Inclusive language is a key part of making your students feel welcome and accepted. It is important to make sure that you use language that is gender, ability and race inclusive.

1. Don't make assumptions

Not everyone identifies with traditional gender roles. Some students and staff may have invisible disabilities or mental illnesses, and it is important to keep that in mind when choosing language. Calling someone or something "bipolar" as a joke or descriptor could be considered offensive by someone with bipolar disorder.

2. Avoid unnecessary descriptors

Avoid descriptors that refer to a person's sexual orientation, disability, age, gender or race unless directly relevant to the story.

3. Use gender-neutral terms

It is now encouraged grammatically to use "they," "them" and "their" in place of his/hers, him/her. This should

become standard when writing letters, memos or any other communication. This ensures that your language is inclusive of all staff and students, no matter what gender they identify with (if they choose to identify with one at all).

Replace common gendered terms with gender-neutral ones. Examples include person instead of woman or man, artificial instead of man-made, staffing the office instead of manning the office and humankind instead of mankind.

4. Learn appropriate terminology

Take time to learn correct terminology for different identities.

Gender Identity: Refers to how we view ourselves as masculine or feminine. For many, gender identity matches their physical body. For some, the way they see themselves as masculine or feminine is different from their physical body.

Intersex: Someone who is biologically not clearly male or female; more accurate and more acceptable than hermaphrodite.

Sexual orientation: The range of human sexuality from gay, lesbian, bisexual to heterosexual.

Transgender(ed): Someone who is, is moving toward or who has been more than one gender.

Transsexual: Someone who was identified at birth as one sex and self-identifies as another.

Two-Spirited Person: A belief in the existence of three genders: male, female and male-female gender. Traditionally, the Two-spirited person was one who had received a gift from the Creator to house both male and female spirits in their bodies, giving them the ability to see the world from two perspectives at the same time.

Queer: An umbrella for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other non-heterosexual identities. Queer is increasingly gaining acceptance as an academic term.

Bisexual: An individual with the potential to be emotionally and/or sexually attracted to members of all genders.

Gay: An individual who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to a person of the same sex; often interchangeable with the term homosexual. ▲

With contributions from the Durham District School Board *Guidelines for Inclusive Language*.

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changes are coming

New president ready to tackle new challenges

By Peggy Sweeney

Photography by Stef + Ethan

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

This year, we welcome Larry O'Malley from Halton.



Larry O'Malley considers himself a "farm kid." Born and raised in Bruce County, he is the 11th of 12 children. He attended elementary school in Teeswater (population about 1,000) and then went to high school in Wingham. Initially considering career options in pharmacy or law, he attended the University of Waterloo, completing a BA and MA in history and political science.

While considering his options, one thing Larry knew was that he wanted to work with people. "I always enjoyed school and drew great satisfaction from being at school, learning and being around

others. My oldest sister was a teacher and I remember as a young boy going to visit her at her school in Toronto. Sometimes she would bring her students up to the farm because these were city kids who had never seen a farm before. I found it fascinating to see the impact she had on those kids and how much she really cared about them."

His sister's influence led Larry to pursue a career in education. After completing his B.Ed at the University of Toronto, he got a job with the Toronto board, teaching history, politics, law and math. He was involved in the Provincial History

Organization, taking part in curriculum writing, assessment and evaluations.

After eight years in Toronto, Larry then spent two years teaching in Peel before moving to Avon-Maitland, where he began his administrative experience as a vice-principal. His last move took him to Halton, where he has been since 2003. After six years as a vice-principal, he was promoted to a principal in 2009.

In 2011, Larry was appointed as the principal of a new school, Garth Webb Secondary in Oakville, where he remained until his secondment to the OPC in July.

His involvement with the OPC began with his first V.P. assignment in Avon-Maitland. "I was aware of the OPC and wanted to be part of a professional association that had a very good reputation for professional development. When I moved to Halton, the local OPC association was looking for someone to work on our local T&C team. So I offered to help, taking on other roles, and eventually became a Provincial Councillor where I was able to get a first-hand view of how the OPC worked throughout the province."

In 2013, Larry joined the Provincial Executive. Since that time, he has served on the Provincial Caucus team that was part of the negotiations in 2012 and 2016, on the lockdown and bomb threat protocol, the Transition Steering Committee, the Benefit Design Team, the Highly Skilled Workforce Committee and the French as a Second Language Labour Market Partnership Committee.

"Throughout my time on Council and Executive, I watched some outstanding presidents who were very good role models. I saw the positive work that they were all doing and how they could really advocate for the organization, and I felt that that was really, crucially important. To me, leadership is about service and giving back, whether it's giving back to the students in your school community or to your professional association.

"Those experiences led me to want to pursue the role of president, both because I was interested in becoming involved at the provincial level and because I thought it was an excellent way to give back to the organization and profession of which I'd been so fortunate to be a part. Over the past couple of decades, I've had a successful career, and

it's largely because of what the OPC and my colleagues have helped me achieve. So, I thought taking on the role of president was an ideal opportunity to make my contribution."

Assuming the role on July 1, Larry identified a couple of key goals for his term. "Number one has to be achieving panel pay equity so that all principals and vice-principals are treated the same; there's no distinguishing by salary. We also need to keep pursuing the repeal of seniority-based hiring (Regulation 274), so that we can allow school boards to establish fair and open hiring practices that bring the best people into the classroom.

"Another key issue is the new prevalent medical conditions protocol that we're going to be facing this year. We have to make sure that everyone who is involved with that – parents, students, teachers and administrators – fully understand what role they have to play to make sure that students are being kept safe and everyone is looking after the students in the best possible way.

"The new protocol is going to have an impact on every school across the province, whether they are elementary or secondary, and whether they have 100 or 2,000 students. Every administrator is going to have to take on this responsibility. As an organization, we need to make sure that we're providing our Members with the help, support

and guidance that they need in terms of educating parents, students and staff with respect to everyone's responsibilities. This is not just a principal/vice-principal responsibility. This is a school community responsibility."

Larry is taking on this role as a new government begins its mandate at Queen's Park. With the House in session over the summer, when it is usually in recess, we have begun to see the priorities of the Minister and Premier, who have both made it clear that the purse strings will be severely tightened for the next several years. That reality will make advocating for anything that costs money far more difficult.

"As soon as the Cabinet was announced, we sent a letter to Minister Thompson congratulating her and seeking a meeting. As front-line school leaders, we have so much experience and expertise to share. We will continue to operate as a political but non-partisan organization, and to advocate for our Members, our students and public education.

"Every time there is a change in government, there is anxiousness about who is taking over and what they want to do. After 28 years in education, I think I've worked under six different governments from all three parties. There have been eight or nine Premiers. We know change

“

Over the past couple of decades, I've had a successful career, and it's largely because of what the OPC and my colleagues have helped me achieve.

”

occurs at Queen's Park and we know we have to find a way to work with whoever is in the Minister's office and the Premier's chair.

"The public wants a good education system to help their children achieve to the best of their ability. I think that we need to educate the people who are new in the government that there are certain fundamentals that they can't take away. Student success must remain a priority. Making sure that we have as many graduates as possible can't be sacrificed. And to achieve those, they have to continue to invest. They must realize that it's an investment in the future; it's not an



expenditure in the sense that they're wasting money in some way.

"Our one and only focus is to get all students in the province to graduate at the end of high school; that's the goal of our system. And that means that all the decisions that are made should be focused on the best interest of the students. It can't be seen to be that the bottom line are some dollars; that can't be the only focus. It has to be based on the best interest of the students."

Our advocacy with the new government has already started. In July, the OPC sent a letter to the new Education Minister urging her to keep the current Health and Physical Education curriculum in place. "The updates that were put in place for the health section of the curriculum – commonly being referred to as the sex ed curriculum although we know it contains much more than that – were fundamentally important. The previous curriculum is 20 years old and doesn't reflect the modern realities of our students' lives."

We all know that cell phones and social media weren't even in existence then. Now, they are ubiquitous. The new curriculum includes those issues, along with sexting, consent and sexual orientation. The letter encouraged the Minister to keep a curriculum component in place that is current, relevant and meeting the needs of our students in the world they live in today. "This is an example of how we can share our experience and expertise with the new Minister and the new government. We want to help them make decisions that are in the best interests of our kids."

Outside of school, Larry's first priority is family. Growing up in a large family cemented that early for him. He has been married to Connie for 32 years and has three children. His oldest, Bryan, is an electrician, Grace has just finished law school and Thomas has just finished a Performing Arts program. He also has two grandchildren, Sibohan and Kieran, who, admittedly, he dotes over.

“

I've had a lot of opportunities in my life and one thing that I'm quite certain of, is that it's because of publicly funded education that I'm sitting where I am.


”

Larry has several hobbies – he is a classic car enthusiast who attends car auctions and car shows. He loves to cook, read and travel. His history background has remained with him and he spends much of his spare time researching. Currently, he is working on a project about World War II investigating how many families lost two or more children in the war. "After three years, I've found over 650 families who lost two children and over 20 families who lost three. It's a connection of mine because family is important, and I want to tell their stories."

Larry recognizes the important role he has taken on, advocating for and acting as the spokesperson for 5,400 OPC Members. "The OPC is a strong organization. We are going to continue to make sure that we can support students and learning. We have to stay the course and keep working at that, because it's why we all became educators in the first place. Our role as an organization has always been, and will continue to be, to support principals and vice-principals so that we can do our job effectively and help all the students across the province.

"I've had a lot of opportunities in my life and one thing that I'm quite certain of, is that it's because of publicly funded education that I'm sitting where I am. It's because I was judged by my ability and not anything else. I want to continue to see that not only my children benefit from that, but my grandchildren as well. We need to continue to make sure that those same opportunities are available for every child." ▲

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Developing a Digital Identity

Curating ourselves as leaders

This past summer, I taught the OPC's Professional Development Course, Collaborative Leadership Inquiry/Digital Leadership Portfolio, for the second time. The beauty of this course is that collaborative inquiry is not just discussed, it is central to the whole process of learning throughout the course. Participants challenge themselves by engaging in creating an online identity through blogging, social media and developing a digital portfolio. The work can be daunting for many, but the course allows participants to experiment in a safe environment where they can create with the support of the instructor as well as their colleagues.

The first time I taught this course a year ago, I was just beginning to develop my own website: debbiedonsky.com/. I had been blogging for a few years on Medium and using various social media sites to share my thinking, writing and art. A friend encouraged me to create my own website while teaching the course – we were really learning together. In the span of a year, it is amazing to look back and see how much I have grown through this learning.

The course nurtures a learning community where we grapple with all things related to being in an online space. One course participant shared that she had been harassed on social media and was feeling hesitant about this work. Being silent in the face of that kind of bullying only gives more power to the aggressor. As educators, we need to make our own news! Do a Google search of your name

and see what comes up. When you create your own digital identity, you tell your story.

One of the participants in the course, Peter LeBlanc (peterjleblanc.com) from the Upper Grand DSB, said, "In the absence of our voice, someone is going to fill the void." Another participant, Ruth Coulter (timereca.wordpress.com), from the Toronto DSB reminds us that "Humility is key when blogging."

The course participants have started writing their own blogs. I would encourage all educators to review them for your own professional learning.

Reflections of an Educator "from the inside" – By Tammy Rodaro

(educationontheinside.wordpress.com)
Tammy writes about her experiences as a vice-principal in the Simcoe County DSB. Her role includes supporting youth who are housed in a correctional facility. In her blog, she shares the learning, experiences and knowledge she has gained in this role.

Educational Thoughts and Reflections – By Ken Keesmaat

(principalkeesmaat.wordpress.com)
Ken is a principal in the Upper Grand DSB. He is experimenting with his online voice and fulfilling a goal he has had for some time. His open style of writing is invitational and motivational.

Angela's Blog – By Angela Adekunle
(intentionallyequitable-school-leadership.wordpress.com)

Angela is a principal in the Peel DSB.

Her blog is focused on practices related to intentionally equitable leadership in schools, and she creates practical next steps we can all take to improve our practices.

Amanda Paterson (amandapaterson.blog) is the Innovation Officer in the Durham DSB. She has experience writing blogs and also coordinating a shared blog space with her board team titled, **Innovative Education** (innovativeed253135704.wordpress.com). Both sites are dynamic!

Gerry Smith's Blog (gdotsmith.com)

Gerry Smith is a principal in the Hamilton-Wentworth DSB. His blog is reflective and brings together family, influences on him and where he is presently in his leadership.

Principal Maddox's Musings –

By Alyce Maddox (principalmaddoxmusings.wordpress.com)

Alyce is a new principal in the Thames Valley DSB. Her blog is reflective, vulnerable and informative. It will be inspiring to read as she continues to develop in her new role!

Principal's Paradigm –

By Janet Jackowski
(principalsparadigm.wordpress.com)

Janet is a principal in the Peel DSB. Her blog is filled with honest dialogue and reflections from a strong sense of equity, empathy and compassion.

If you are looking to move into the blogosphere, this is the course for you! ▲

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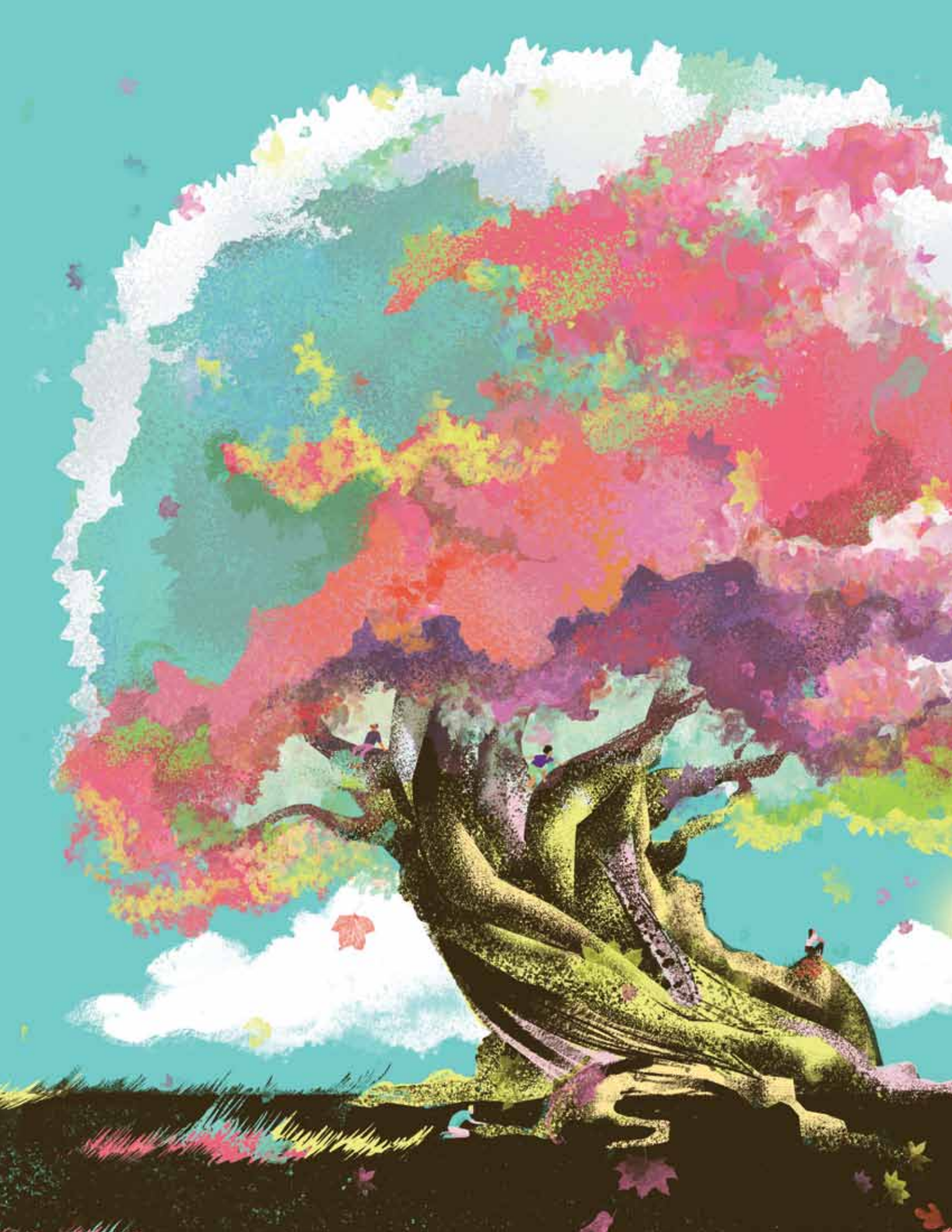
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Culturally Responsive Leadership

Supporting diversity, equity and inclusion

By Ken MacKinnon

Illustration by Dushan Milic

As our schools become more diverse spaces and the social, political and cultural climate within our society changes, the need for schools to meet the needs of students is stronger than ever. There are times when we as principals and vice-principals are challenged to meet these diverse needs. Culturally responsive leadership offers a way forward. It opens the door to challenging current structures, biases and privilege, making way for greater inclusion in our schools.

BECOMING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ...

challenges leaders to
examine current
practices that are
oppressive to create
change, close gaps and
ensure that *all* students
are successful.



must address the school culture and personal lens with which we view our students.” This is the critical starting point for all school leaders. If we are to make change, we must first look at our attitudes and beliefs about the children and families we serve. What we believe about our students is generally developed out of dominant discourses and knowledge that have been maintained within our education system for decades, as well as our own privilege, biases and power. Power is at work through the ideas and practices that have come to appear as “normal” in schools. Privilege, on the other hand, is about the assignment of particular benefits to certain groups over others.

Privilege comes in many forms and in different degrees for different people. It is also connected to bias, and what we believe about our students and their families. If we are to become culturally responsive leaders, it is critical to examine our biases, for what we believe matters. Our beliefs inform our decisions which, in turn, have an impact on the children and communities we serve. Looking to ourselves for context enables us to see our students as products of their lived experiences, revealing the ways in

What is Culturally Responsive Leadership and why does it matter?

There are many frameworks that can be used to define culturally responsive leadership. However, a common trend in these frameworks is that it is positioned as a process: one cannot wake up one day and suddenly become culturally responsive. Ann Lopez conceptualizes it this way: “I argue for culturally responsive leadership that builds on the notion of conscientization, a form of activism, that provides a way for educational leaders to theorize their work, develop agency, take action, and build schoolwide capacity on issues of equity, diversity, and social justice,” (2016, p. 18). It is clear from Lopez’s description that becoming culturally responsive requires deep reflection around how one carries out one’s work. It challenges leaders to examine current practices that are oppressive to create change, close gaps and ensure that *all* students are successful. Data from across Ontario tells us that there are students who are not being served in our education system. For example, black and Indigenous students from across the province are struggling academically and are disproportionately represented in our Safe Schools programs. The question becomes, where does one start in order to disrupt this trend?

Looking Within: Critical self-reflection

Author Bonnie Davis writes, “If we want to raise the academic achievement of all students in our schools, we



which they, like ourselves, sometimes feel included as well as excluded. After looking in the mirror and reflecting on our beliefs and practices, we must then examine our impact on student learning and well-being. To do this, we have to come to *know* our students.

Who are our students?

Deconstructing and reconstructing our systems

As school leaders, we are well aware of the value of data and student voice in helping us improve our systems. Data exposes a great deal about our impact, and can be used as a tool to understand how our students learn, their experiences at our school, as well as their well-being and academic achievement. Student voice can tell us a great deal about what needs to change. As leaders, we must be prepared to provide our students with the means of sharing their voice.

In her article *Challenging Deficit Thinking*, Lois Weiner writes, "... an impersonal, bureaucratic school culture undercuts many of the teaching attitudes and behaviours that draw on student strengths. This bureaucratic culture fosters the pervasive assumption that when students misbehave or achieve poorly, they must be 'fixed' because the problem inheres in the students or their families, not in the social ecology of the school, grade, or classroom,"(2006, p. 42).

Weiner strikes at the heart of the problem in the reference to "impersonal and bureaucratic" school cultures.

Structures, mechanisms, decision-making processes and procedures all need to be re-examined within our school systems if we are to truly work towards improvements in student achievement and well-being of all our students. By deconstructing these oppressive structures through an analysis of data, we can begin to build new structures to support all students. This is not easy work, as it involves altering mindsets, challenging biases and disrupting privilege. Yet it is absolutely necessary if we are to uphold a culturally responsive education system.

Doing the work

Doing the work of culturally responsive leadership is both challenging and necessary if our goal is to ensure success for all. In his article on anti-oppressive education, Kevin Kumashiro encapsulates both this challenge and the need for this work to be done. He writes, "I argue ... that we are not trying to move to a better place; rather, we are just trying to move. The aspect of oppression

that we need to work against is the repetition of sameness, the ongoing citation of the same harmful histories that have traditionally been cited ... we want to constantly become, we want difference, change, newness. And this change cannot come if we close off the space-between," (2000, p. 46).

Becoming a culturally responsive leader is about creating movement away from oppressive structures. It is about altering our day-to-day decision-making processes to consider the impact of "sameness." If we have the courage and conviction to challenge our historical practices and to move to "newness" inspired by our knowledge of the lived experiences of our students and their families, then we can say we are doing the work of culturally responsive leaders. It is not a point of arrival as much as it is a journey of "becoming."

Structures, mechanisms,
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improvements in



**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
AND WELL-BEING ...**



Where do I start?

Thus far, this article has highlighted the importance of turning the mirror inwards and looking carefully at our own biases, as well as coming to a greater understanding of our students' varied identities through the use of data and student voice. The question becomes, what do you do next? How can principals encourage others to take up the cause and disrupt oppressive structures? What follows is a list of places to start on the journey to becoming more culturally responsive:

- Form a team: None of this work can be done by one person. Hence, it is important to reach out to other teacher leaders and support staff in your school to begin to look at your data and plan how the school might move forward to break down existing barriers to learning and well-being.
- Engage the team in an evaluation of the school climate: Is the physical environment welcoming and conducive to learning? Does the social environment promote communication and interaction? Is there an environment that promotes a strong sense of belonging and positive self-esteem? Does the academic environment promote learning and active engagement? (Adapted from *The Principal as Leader of the Equitable School*, p. 56)
- Take what you have learned to the rest of the staff: It is critical that all staff become part of the conversation if real change is going to occur. By sharing what your team has learned about your school with the rest of the

If we have the courage and conviction to challenge our historical practices and to move to “newness” inspired by our knowledge of the lived experiences of our students and their families, then we can say we are doing the work of



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERS.



staff, you can begin to have conversations about the barriers that exist in the learning environment. However, it is important to remember that staff may not have had the opportunity to reflect upon their own biases and the privilege they hold. Nor have they perhaps thought about the impact their actions and beliefs have on the students they teach. Following is a list of activities one might consider when working with staff to become more culturally responsive:

- > Create norms such as: speak your truth, remain engaged and expect discomfort (Adapted from *The Principal as Leader of the Equitable School*, p. 73) to help guide discussions around equity and barriers to learning so that staff feel comfortable to share both what they know and don't know.
- > Engage staff in discussions around privilege, power and bias. There are a few examples of how this might be done including asking staff to record how they see themselves in terms of their identity; drawing circles around those identities in which they feel accepted by society and triangles around those identities in which they feel excluded. You may also want to implement the *Acknowledging Power Wheel* (*The Principal as Leader of the Equitable School*, p. 75), which asks staff to

evaluate their position of power in society in relation to certain categories such as socio-economic and ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation etc. Participants rate themselves on the wheel for each category according to the level of power they have, i.e. the further away from the centre, the more marginalized you become.

- > Look at the curriculum and how it is “delivered” in the school through an equitable lens using James A. Banks’ *Inclusive Curriculum Framework*. It is critical, for example, in the teaching of Canadian history that we consider the multitude of perspectives that tell the true story, inclusive of the perspective of Indigenous peoples and not just that of the white European colonizer.
- > Engage in courageous conversations with the understanding that what we believe impacts our actions and decision-making processes. *The Ladder of Inference* created by Chris Argyris provides a helpful framework for understanding how our beliefs influence and largely determine our actions. If we can challenge and consequently change what we believe about how certain students learn, we can disrupt structures that marginalize these students and build up new structures in support of learning and well-being.

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This article is a step to providing a framework for understanding what it means to be a culturally responsive leader, has given rise to the importance of looking within to examine our own biases and has provided some suggestions in terms of how to move forward in the creation of more culturally responsive schools. Ultimately, this article has served as an invitation to join other principals and vice-principals on this journey not only for ourselves as leaders, but most importantly, for our students. ▲

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Secondary Principal Perspectives

How work intensification impacts their vice-principals

By Drs. Louis Lim and Katina Pollock

Depending on individual school structure, secondary principals may be assigned one or more vice-principal(s). Despite how common this organizational structure is for public schools across Ontario and Canada, a surprisingly small amount of research has explored the connections between the roles of the principal and vice-principal.

Existing research concentrates on principals' work and/or role (e.g., Cattonar et al., 2007; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015; Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2014, 2015), the vice-principal role (e.g., Armstrong, 2010; Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012; Melton, Mallory, Mayes, & Chance, 2012; Mertz, 2006; Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2017), and the transition from vice-principal to principal (e.g., City, 2010; Kwan, 2009). The literature generally treats these concentrations as distinct categories; in reality, these roles and their associated work are closely related and often overlap. To understand the

relationship between the roles of the principal and vice-principal, our study explored secondary principals' understandings and perceptions of the secondary vice-principal role. Specifically, we investigated how secondary principals perceive the vice-principal role, how they support their vice-principals on a daily basis, and how they support their long-term growth.

Work intensification for Ontario principals makes this line of inquiry both timely and important. This includes both increased volume and complexity of their daily, short-term and long-term work. A recent study funded by the Ontario Prin-

cipals' Council found that Ontario principals work an average of 58.7 hours a week, with only five hours devoted to curriculum and instruction (Pollock et al., 2014, 2015; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). Another study, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education, found that principals' and vice-principals' workloads have increased as a result of provincial policies, school improvement planning and expectations from the school board (Leithwood & Azah, 2014).

The principalship is circumscribed by mandatory compliance to Ontario Ministry of Education policies. Adherence to these policies intensifies workload while decreasing autonomy and decision-making in the principal role (Pollock et al., 2014, 2015; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). This work intensification directly impacts the vice-principal role because vice-principals are assigned to support principals (Barnett et al., 2012; Melton et al., 2012). Given that there is no standard list of vice-principal duties, the principal defines the vice-principal role based on what they are willing to delegate (Barnett et al., 2012; Kwan, 2009; Melton et al., 2012). The absence of a prescriptive standard list of duties means that the vice-principal role has been poorly defined (Melton et al., 2012; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010). Consequently, we sought to study the connection between principals' work intensification and the poorly defined role of vice-principals.

We employed a qualitative research approach to investigate how principals believe their own work intensification has impacted the vice-principal role. We interviewed 13 secondary principals from four Ontario school boards. The participants' experience as secondary principals ranged from two to 16 years, and all had worked with at least one secondary vice-principal. Our sample consisted of seven male and six female participants, with representation from both urban and rural school settings. We have given each participant a pseudonym to protect their identities.

Overall, the participants in our study expressed that their work intensification as principals has changed the nature of the secondary vice-principal role: their vice-principals' work has intensified and become more complex. According to the findings in our study, secondary principals believe, as a result of work intensification, that (a) vice-principals should function simultaneously as operations managers and instructional leaders; (b) vice-principals struggle to prioritize operational and instructional duties and are impeded by time constraints

in their daily work; (c) the vice-principal role is performed collaboratively with the principal and (d) principals mentor their vice-principals for daily support and coach them for long-term growth. Significantly, our findings about the collaborative nature of the vice-principal role contradicts existing research (e.g., City, 2010; Mertz, 2006), and provides new perspective on work intensification for principals in Ontario.

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS EXPECT THEIR VICE-PRINCIPALS TO PERFORM BOTH OPERATIONAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL DUTIES

According to our study, managing the daily operations of the school site is a major component of the vice-principal role. Specifically, this involves reacting to various situations that arise throughout the school day; this can occupy 20–100 per cent of vice-principals' work days, and generally involves student discipline, attendance issues, and conflict resolution. According to Melanie, one way vice-principals can proactively prevent inappropriate student behaviour is getting to know the students by being visible in the school.

Further, the study participants emphasized that the secondary vice-principal role involves supporting people within the school. As Daniel mentioned, "You're either supporting the student, the staff member or parents. That's the majority of how [a vice-principal's] day is spent." According to Denise, vice-principals' top three duties are developing relationships with students, developing relationships with staff and developing relationships with parents. Denise's view is consistent with *The Ontario Leadership Framework* (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013), which identified "building relationships and developing people" as a domain for effective leadership.

An important component of classroom visits is asking teachers follow-up questions outside of class, including questions about teachers' instructional strategies.

Because of work intensification, vice-principals must simultaneously function as operations managers and instructional leaders in their daily work, which they can achieve by combining the two processes and performing operational duties through an instructional lens.

In addition, the secondary principals also expect their vice-principals to be instructional leaders. For example, Daniel's vice-principals lead "professional learning at staff meetings, department meetings and on professional training days." Victor noted that it can be intimidating to stand in front of 100 teachers, so he provides his vice-principals support for that opportunity. However, the participants indicated that they prefer their vice-principals to facilitate teacher leaders delivering the professional learning, because doing so helps build teacher capacity and sustain change initiatives. The secondary principals also expect their vice-principals to visit classes regularly. Olivia emphasized that an important component of classroom visits is asking teachers follow-up questions outside of class, including questions about teachers' instructional strategies.

As mentioned earlier, the interviewed principals emphasized that their vice-principals can spend most, if not all, of the school day on operations management. As such, the secondary principals believe that these operational duties can – and should – be performed with an instructional lens. For example, Marla explained how student discipline and attendance should be viewed as instructional opportunities: "Every time you work with a student, it's a learning opportunity and you are trying to affect change." Marla also identified creating the master school timetable as another operational task that can be viewed as instructional. She suggested timetabling physical education period one followed by core subjects such as science, math and English can help improve student success since students have been physically active.

Overall, the principals believe that, because of work intensification, their vice-principals must simultaneously function as operations managers and instructional leaders in their daily work, which they can achieve by combining the two processes and performing operational duties through an instructional lens.

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS PROVIDE THEIR VICE-PRINCIPALS WITH DAILY SUPPORTS

The secondary principals in the study support their vice-principals on a daily basis by collaboratively solving problems

and making decisions. According to Wayne, challenging situations require that he and his vice-principals collaboratively consider multiple perspectives: "You've got a scenario that's come up. What's the best way to address this particular issue? What do we think? What are the things we are not thinking about? Possible consequence?" Steven further underscored the collaborative nature of the relationship, explaining that, due to the growing complexity of school administrators' tasks and responsibilities, he and his vice-principal function as co-managers and co-leaders.

The participants also support their vice-principals through regular communication. Denise carves out time during the school day to have regular communication with her vice-principals, while Victor has an open-door policy and meets with his vice-principals at any time. The principals serve as mentors by encouraging their vice-principals to consider different perspectives and potential challenges and expecting their vice-principals to consult with them when they have questions or need reassurance.

The secondary principals also support their vice-principals by modelling their expectations and leading by example. When conducting a challenging meeting, Gavin invites his vice-principals to attend so they can observe and learn from him. "And if not to participate, to simply listen, watch, observe, learn from the interaction such that they have a reference point ... springboard to their own growth and development."

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS SUPPORT THEIR VICE-PRINCIPALS' LONG-TERM GROWTH

The principals encourage their vice-principals to use the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a self-assessment tool for long-term growth. The OLF has five domains: (a) setting directions, (b) building relationships and developing people, (c) developing the organization to support desired practices, (d) improving the instructional program and (e) securing accountability (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Victor explained how he uses the OLF to support

his vice-principals' growth: "Highlight where you think your strengths are, where you think you have some growth in, and where you think you have the most growth, and work with that person to develop." Denise added that the personal leadership resources (cognitive, psychological, social) in the OLF are a generally untapped area that vice-principals can attain and use to continue their long-term growth.

The participants also expect their vice-principals, as principals-in-training, to eventually perform the full spectrum of vice-principal duties and to share their principal duties. As Denise stated, "The vice-principal who says 'I don't know this job' needs an opportunity to learn it." Although budgeting is the principal's responsibility, Geoff cautioned: "If you're not exposed to budget when you're a vice-principal, and you don't know what to do or it's not shared, how do you expect to know that if you take on the principal role?" To prepare his vice-principals for the principal role, Wayne has coaching conversations where he asks challenging questions that take his vice-principals outside their comfort zone and encourages them to adopt a whole-school perspective.

SUMMARY

This study sought to connect the work intensification of principals and the vice-principal role. Increased operational duties and expectations for instructional leadership have intensified the principal and vice-principal roles, and the participants in our study emphasized that both roles are circumscribed by mandatory compliance with Ministry of Education initiatives. The secondary principals in this study noted that their vice-principals need to function as both operations managers and instructional leaders simultaneously to cope with work intensification. Due to the increasing complexity of their work, principals collaborate with their vice-principals and offer both daily and long-term supports.

Moreover, the participants also highlighted the struggle their vice-principals face when attempting to prioritize operational and instructional tasks. School administrators are required to spend their days supporting teachers' instructional and assessment practices to improve student learning and achievement while also being strong operations managers who can create the safe and supportive working conditions necessary for instructional leadership to occur (Fullan, 2014). Additionally, the absence of a standard description of the vice-principal role contributes to work intensification. Without a prescriptive, standardized list of duties, vice-principals often

have to interpret how to perform their daily tasks, which can cause role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload (Melton et al., 2012; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010).

IMPLICATIONS

Our study may be of interest to principals, vice-principals and those aspiring to be vice-principals. We hope our findings will encourage principals to reflect on how they support their vice-principals on a daily and long-term basis. Due to work intensification, the principal and vice-principal roles have become increasingly complex, resulting in a collaborative (rather than isolated) relationship. We hope that vice-princi-

School administrators are required to spend their days supporting teachers' instructional and assessment practices to improve student learning and achievement while also being strong operations managers who can create the safe and supportive working conditions necessary for instructional leadership to occur.

pals, whose job description is poorly defined (Melton et al., 2012; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010), can reflect on their role within the context of their principals' expectations. Aspiring vice-principals can also learn about the role through principals' perspectives on vice-principal duties and responsibilities, and the short- and long-term supports principals can provide.

Finally, our study adds to the growing literature on the changing nature of the vice-principal role. Consistent with research sponsored by the Ontario Principals' Council (Pollock et al., 2014, 2015, 2017) and the Ontario Ministry of Education (Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015), our study found that an increasing number of operational duties dominate the school

One way vice-principals can proactively prevent inappropriate student behaviour is getting to know the students by being visible in the school.

day at the expense of instructional leadership, and that principals and vice-principals perform their duties collaboratively to cope with the increase in and complexity of their work. Overall, we hope our study and findings can engage readers in reflective and critical dialogue on the contemporary realities of both the principalship and vice-principalship roles in Ontario, and how the relationship between these roles can be maintained, sustained and improved. ▲

Dr. Louis Lim is vice-principal at Richmond Green Secondary School, York Region District School Board. This article is based on his doctoral thesis supervised by Dr. Katina Pollock. His thesis is available at <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/4039/>

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Health & Physical Education	CONT 606
History	CONT 789
Mathematics	CONT 573
First Nations, Metis and Inuit Studies	CONT 638
Science - General	CONT 609

ABQ SENIOR

Biology	CONT 773
Chemistry	CONT 605
English	CONT 771
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History	CONT 794
Law	CONT 637
Mathematics	CONT 574
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Social Sciences	CONT 635
Science - General	CONT 610
Visual Arts	CONT 614

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English	CONT 590
French	CONT 591
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History	CONT 593
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Visual Arts	CONT 599

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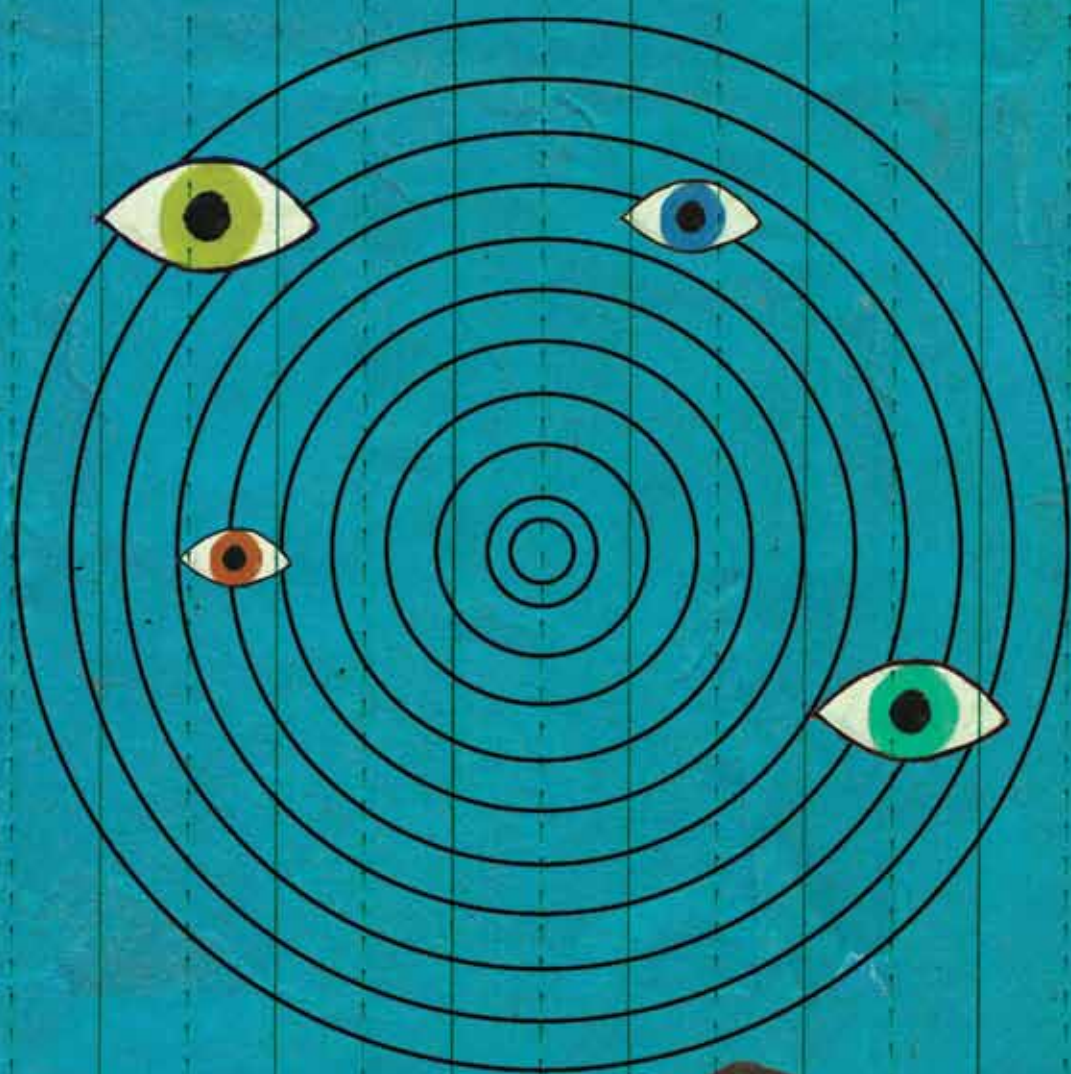
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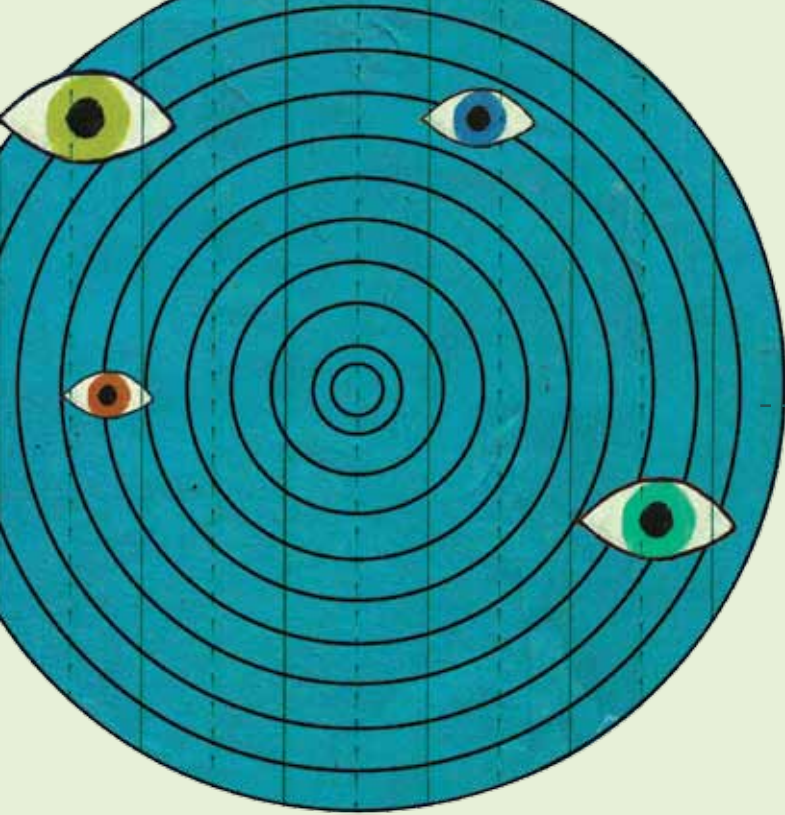
Drawing a line in the proverbial sands of school leadership

By Protective Services Team

Illustration by Lino

School leaders are called on to navigate murky waters, make difficult and often unpopular decisions and supervise students and staff while operating within the defined parameters of professional ethics, school board policies and the law. Despite the enormous and often daunting expectations placed on them, they are, after all, still human. And it is human nature to be challenged by ill-defined boundaries. Since the inception of the OPC, the Protective Services Team (PST) has assisted Members in their contemplation of the line between “doing the right things” and “doing things right.” School leaders face the risk of overstepping boundaries and becoming subject to scrutiny, investigation and possible discipline.

Here are three common areas in which principals and vice-principals experience boundary challenges.



Despite privacy settings and the use of a personal account, your tweets, posts, likes and other digital actions are vulnerable to public exposure.

Social Media and Electronic Communication

Social media continues to blur the lines between our personal and professional lives. Your “digital footprint” should be consistent with your role. A principal or vice-principal never ceases to be such, particularly where social media is concerned. In a digital world where clicks, posts and shares are public, it is of paramount importance that school leaders carefully consider what they do online. Failure to do so can result in allegations of misconduct, disloyalty to one’s employer and/or a breach of confidence in their ability to lead a school. The PST has represented Members who have found themselves subject to scrutiny because of their online profile or their digital communication. While you may interpret your digital footprint one way, others may interpret it differently.

Regardless of intention, the misinterpretation of online behaviour as socially, politically or religiously controversial or offensive can have irreversible ramifications for the school leader. According to the Ontario College of Teachers’ Professional Advisory, *Maintaining Professionalism – Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media*, “Canada’s Supreme Court ruled that teachers’ off-duty conduct, even when not directly related to students, is relevant to their suitability to teach. Members must maintain a

sense of professionalism at all times – in their personal and professional lives.”

According to the same Advisory, “intentional or inadvertent misuse of social media and electronic communication could have serious disciplinary consequences professionally.” The PST encourages Members to take heed of the Advisory and follow it carefully. Here are some social media tips:

- **You are always a P/VP.** What you post, like, retweet or share on your private social media accounts reflect on you as a professional. It is dangerous to assume that your social media content and actions are private and personal. Despite privacy settings and the use of a personal account, your tweets, posts, likes and other digital actions are vulnerable to public exposure. You run the risk of having online users beyond the intended audience view your material. Social media usage and electronic communication must be governed accordingly.
- **Un-tag yourself if you’ve been tagged in unprofessional photos** or ask your friends to delete photos if they would make you vulnerable to charges of unprofessionalism. “A picture is worth a thousand words” and even with the simplest of digital devices, a photograph can be enlarged and enhanced to display

background images that may detract from professionalism. If in doubt, have a colleague or advisor assist in monitoring your profile or help you identify problematic posts/photos.

- **There is no such thing as a private account.** Hacking is now a common occurrence and “friends” or “followers” can share, screenshot or copy and paste your content. Anything you post (or re-post) can be made public – to your Director, Trustees, staff, students, school community or the media.
- **Don’t use social media to complain about your job,** role, school, board, colleagues, students, parents, staff or boss. Do not post/re-post personal feelings unless they are positive. Under common law, employees in any organization must serve the employer with good faith and must not intentionally do anything to cause harm: “The duty of loyalty includes an obligation not to act in a manner detrimental to the employer’s reputation, not to put oneself in a position of a conflict of interest, and not to disclose confidential information. Employees violate their duty of loyalty if they engage in public criticism or act in a way that is detrimental to their employer’s legitimate business interests” (Furi, 2008: 5.6).
- **Google your name** to see if there are any posts/images that you are unaware of. If so,

request that they be deleted by contacting the poster. You may be following ethical and professional standards in managing your own social media and electronic communications, but you must be aware of posts about you made by others.

The School Leader Who is (also) a Parent

For any parent, monitoring, guiding and advocating for their child's education is a huge responsibility; for school leaders, there are additional challenges because of the professional relationships that may also be implicated. Special education issues, teacher assessments, advice from guidance counsellors and decisions by other administrators are all examples that might give rise to a school leader's need to advocate on behalf of their child. If the child attends school in the same school board where the school leader works, it may be particularly challenging to advocate for the child without crossing professional lines.

When engaging with your child's school in the capacity of parent, it is difficult to remove the "school leader" hat from your head. Your lens of scrutiny is inevitably coloured by your knowledge and experience. Regardless of the competence and comfort level of the teacher and support staff at your child's school, your

status as a P/VP can become an intimidating factor for those with whom you are discussing matters related to your child.

- **Principals and vice-principals should not shy away from advocating for their child(ren)** simply because of their professional position. That said, remain mindful of the role distinction and the challenges in separating the two. Even when conducting yourself as a parent, school staff may still perceive you as an administrator. Do not confer any advantage on your child by virtue of your positional power. For example, recuse yourself from the decision-making process of mitigating discipline, making an exception to a rule or presenting an award or distinction to your child.
- **Avoid language that can be perceived as threatening**, intimidating, judgmental, condescending, patronizing or hurtful. You come to the table equipped with information, perspective and confidence that your child's school staff may not necessarily be used to in their interactions with parents. Manage your tone and maintain a respectful dialogue.
- **If possible and practical, allow your non-school leader spouse/partner to take the lead role** in potentially contentious situations. It may prove less contentious for school staff to engage with a parent/guardian who is a non-educator.

- **Respect and follow applicable communication protocols** when addressing your concerns. As a school leader, you arguably would prefer that a parent contact you first before reaching out to your supervisory officer or Director with an expressed concern. Apply the same principles of courtesy and lines of communication in your role as a parent. Afford your child's teacher the courtesy of first point of contact before contacting the vice-principal, principal or supervisory officer.

Relationships with Members of Staff

Workplace relationships are a reality, particularly when people work long hours and closely with one another. We often spend more hours with our work colleagues than we do with our family members. Depending on the nature of the work relationship, it can be easy to find oneself relying on a colleague as a friend, confidant or intimate companion. Many relationship experts have written about the dynamics of work relationships and the risks of crossing boundaries, particularly real for the person who holds the supervisory or "superior" role in the relationship. To protect yourself from findings of conflict of interest, favouritism, time theft, computer misuse and/or sexual harassment, establish clear boundaries at work and online. These boundaries are often outlined in

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boundaries

school board policies and, as such, the PST advises Members to know and follow the applicable policy and training materials.

In a 2003 case, *Bell v. Computer Sciences Corp.*, manager Jeremy Bell was fired after the employer found evidence of a sexual relationship

with a female subordinate and improper use of the company's computers, and Bell then blatantly lied in denying it. Evidence of the misconduct came to light after an examination of the woman's computer revealed numerous sexually explicit messages to and from Bell. Bell's own hard drive was then

examined, and it was found to contain not only a lengthy, ongoing sexual dialogue with the subordinate, but also an extensive trove of pornographic photos in violation of the company's strict policies. When he was summoned to a meeting with management and questioned, Bell denied everything, maintaining that his relationship with the woman was friendly but "strictly business." Bell's employment was terminated, and the termination was upheld in court. This case highlights the inherent risks not only of work relationships with subordinates, but dishonesty with one's employer once an investigation into the alleged misconduct ensues.

- **Know your board policies with respect to conflict of interest.** Some board policies are vague and lack clear guidance in respect of relationships. However, it is widely understood that anyone in a supervisory capacity should avoid, whenever possible, a personal relationship of any kind with staff under their supervision. At the very least, you should inform the board of the existence of any family or personal connections at the outset of the supervisory relationship.
- **Disclose a developing personal relationship to your supervisory officer.** Given the amount of time spent each day at work with colleagues, relationships are likely to form. Should the school leader find themselves developing feelings that would extend the relationship beyond professional boundaries, consider whether a transfer for one of you to an alternate location would be a viable solution. Bring this informa-

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tion to the attention of your supervisory officer as early in the relationship as is reasonable, and the SO can assist in facilitating a transfer of schools for one or both of you as appropriate.

- **Where a relationship exists, minimize direct responsibility for supervising the person.** While waiting for the transfer of schools, proactive measures can be taken to mitigate the risk of allegations of misconduct, preferential treatment or conflict of interest. It is especially important that a school leader avoid direct supervision of a romantic partner or family member that is of an evaluative nature or for which the subordinate can incur a benefit, including a Teacher Performance Appraisal, classroom or grade assignments and supervision schedules. If your family member is on an OT or LTO list, ensure complete transparency with senior administration and seek direction on whether they can be called to work in your school. Put everything in writing so that you have evidence of your transparency should the matter later be investigated.
- **Ensure that you can prove the consensual nature of any romantic relationship.** While you may be convinced that the relationship is entirely consensual, your board officials may be concerned about the potential for the romantic subordinate to allege workplace sexual harassment should the relationship end. In accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, a relationship with a subordinate may meet the definition of sexual harassment. Overt consent should be sought at every stage of the developing relationship.
- **Don't compound any misconduct by lying.** Where misconduct in and of itself may not provide cause for termination of employment, dishonesty certainly can. As a school leader, you are held to a higher standard and your employer must be able to trust you. The PST advises that you answer honestly in investigations into your alleged misconduct. Always call the PST for advice and assistance when needed.

In carrying out the daily operations of a school, school leaders face challenges that can create serious implications. The training that you receive, together with the ongoing support of staff, colleagues, senior management and the OPC, equip you to make good decisions and mitigate the risks of crossing boundaries that

could lead to potential negative consequences. The PST advises Members to “call before you dig.” Consultation, collaboration and careful consideration should precede action, wherever possible.

You have a great amount of discretion in some areas of your role. In others, not so much. What remains consistent is the high standard to which you are held by your employer, staff and the school community as well as the level of scrutiny

that comes with the position. It is important that you familiarize yourself with board policies, seek advice and counsel regarding education legislation and always stay within the ethical, policy and legal boundaries of your role. ▲

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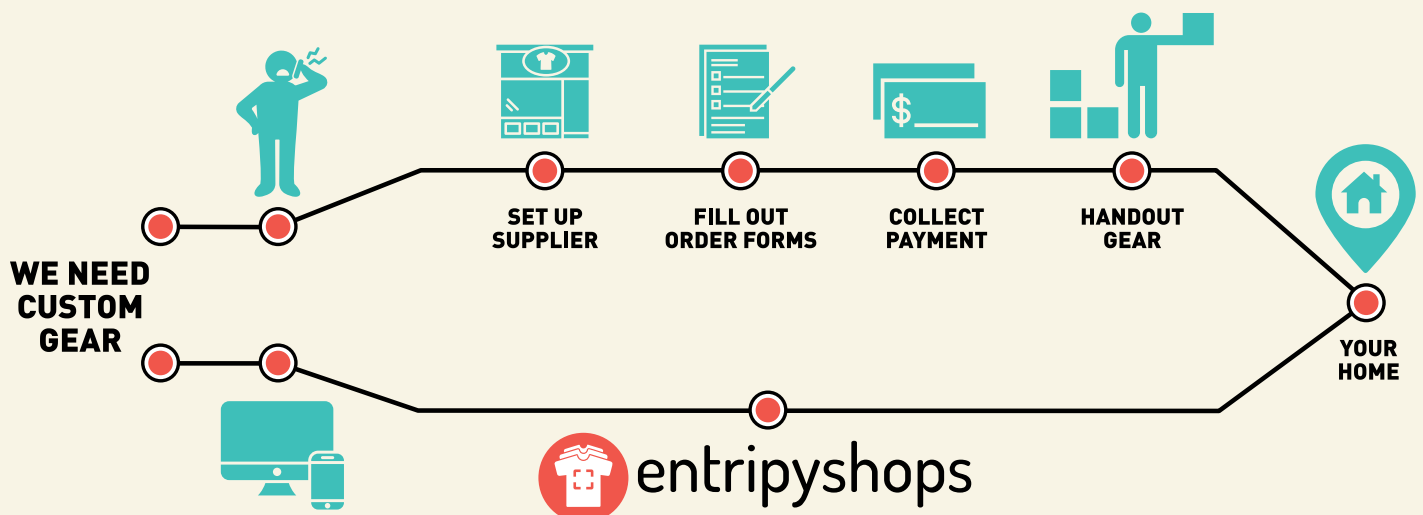
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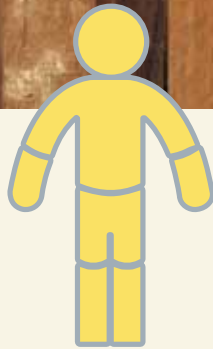
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Square Pegs & Round Holes

The art of working together as administrators

By Christine Bellini and Samir Chawla

Illustration by Sandra Dionisi



To say that my colleague and I are opposites is an understatement. On the surface, we appear to have nothing in common; one of us is a middle-aged, married, artistic female, born and raised in Northern Ontario.

The other is a young, single, science-minded male, born and raised in cities and suburbs. We do not read the same books, watch the same movies or have any hobbies in common. None of this really matters because it is superficial. What matters is that on a deeper level, we are fundamentally alike.

Administrators do not choose their work partners. They are placed in schools and begin working together much like police officers and paramedics. Even though we had been classmates in our principal training courses and were friends, neither one of us had any idea that our relationship would be put to such a test: that of working together as vice-principals. We were no longer teachers who have many colleagues to have lunch with or lean on when they need support. Since the Harris government divided teachers and administrators in 1997, administrators found it more difficult to socialize with teachers whom they supervise and discipline. For vice-principals, your co-worker is often “it.”

Our purpose in writing this article is to shed light on the topic of administrator relationships in education. Over time, administrators have been assigned more responsibility including ethical, legal and professional knowledge about the safety and well-being of staff and students. In a job that is stressful, intense and demanding, the last thing anyone wants or needs is tension between colleagues. The quality of an administration partnership can be the tipping point between a great leadership team or increased friction and stress that affects everyone.

When we began researching this topic, it became apparent that it was not a common one in educa-

tion research (Armstrong, 2010). There are articles written about teachers, teacher and administration relationships and employee relationships. However the focus on vice-principals is scarce (Kwan, 2009).

Although not a formal study, we hope that our message sparks much needed conversation and action about how we can support each other and learn to work with one another in a way that is respectful, caring, productive and sometimes fun.

Scholarly Research

Most of the research on employee relationships has been driven by the business sector and the field of social psychology. Simon, Judge and Halvorsen-Ganepola (2010) found that co-workers who got along reported higher job satisfaction and quality of life, and similar studies have reported a 50 per cent increase in employee satisfaction (Riordan, 2013). A second find was that the more closely aligned coworkers were in terms of their values, the more they respected and trusted each other.

A second study by Milam (2012) examined workplace friendships and their effect on job satisfaction, stress and productivity. When friendships were collegial, employees reported enjoying going to work, feeling happier and being more productive. The same results applied when the opposite occurred. When co-workers did not get along, they

reported higher absenteeism, higher stress levels and lower productivity.

Workplace relationships require nurturing, attention and time, and if the relationship becomes antagonistic or dysfunctional, it can have a significant impact on well-being and climate (Milam, 2012). We made a conscious decision to examine our relationship to see the impact it had on our work environment. Our goal was to create a positive environment for our staff, our students and ourselves. The task itself is daunting, and like all successful relationships, requires that a solid foundation be built to withstand the daily wear and tear of life – or in our case, the roles of school administrators.

According to Dotan (2009), there are six factors to consider with work partnerships: trust, transference, sanity check, value and interests, proximity and instrumentality. We agreed upon *our* top five foundational practices that were necessary to make our working partnership successful.

1. Respect: What does that really mean?

We hear the word respect a great deal in our society and understand that it means different things to different people. As work partners, we often discuss what respect meant to us when we were growing up and share examples

of times we did not feel respected. This helps us understand each other.

However, respect is *earned*, and when colleagues say they respect each other but every action they do demonstrates they do not, it can be very difficult since it directly leads into our next concept – that of *trust*.

2. Trust: It's all in the actions not in the words

Many adults have trust issues and trust itself is very hard to define. It is difficult to establish if broken or sabotaged. Many books on trust in the workplace focus on how colleagues need to trust each other. Popular techniques such as trust games/activities are meant to increase trust among co-workers – but there is little data to substantiate that these games are effective. Perhaps this is because trust is part of a complex emotional cogni-

tive process that can mean different things to different people (Reina & Reina, 2006).

Being an administrator puts you front and centre in many perilous and sometimes dangerous situations. Whether it is a simple gesture like attending an afternoon meeting for your work partner or something far more serious like breaking up a physical altercation in the parking lot, you have to have each other's back – figuratively and literally. Trust can manifest itself emotionally, intellectually and physically. If someone says, "You can trust me" or "this is

a safe space" but their actions demonstrate that is not true or genuine, then it is very difficult for administrators to work together.

Trust in a working relationship is being comfortable and confident with the words, actions and decisions of your colleague. Blind trust based on seniority or position is superficial and does not satiate in the same way as genuine trust does. Like respect, authentic trust is not automatic and immediate. It takes time, experience and reflection.

3. Care – In loco parentis for each other

British scholar Nel Noddings (2013) wrote that every educator should care for students as they would their own children and that teachers should demonstrate unconditional emotional, physical and mental care at all times for each and every student. In Ontario, *in loco parentis* – in place of the

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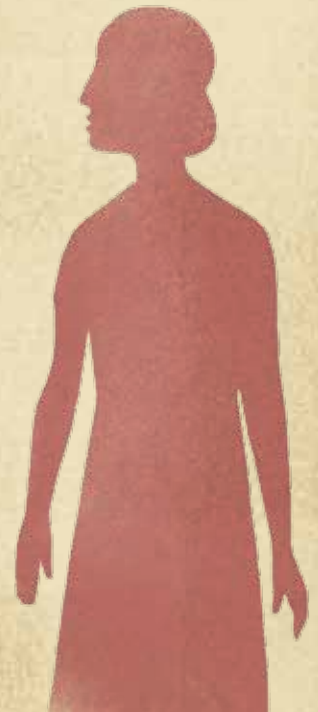




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parent – is enshrined in our education law and is a legal requirement of all educators in the public education system. In the absence of a parent in a school setting, teachers and administrators must act as “that of a careful and prudent parent” with students.

One of the major problems with Nodding’s work is its failure to answer one very important question – who is taking care of the educator? There is no doubt an administrator’s job is to take care of students, but it must be balanced with taking care of their staff as well. And at the end of the day, we believe that it is an administrator’s job to take care of each other. Being able to read your colleague’s facial expressions and asking if the other person is okay is a small gesture that goes a long way. Let your work partner know that self-care is essential and if they need time to debrief or just go for a walk alone, that you support them.

4. Rhythm – Crashing, colliding and surfing

It takes time to establish a rhythm between colleagues because we are all unique individuals. The key to surfing each other’s waves is to relax and let them happen. My partner

cannot control my energy and any attempt would only leave him frustrated. Trying to drag my partner into one of my adventures may end up with me being disappointed since I want him to be as enthusiastic as I am – all the time. Relax is not an easy word for some administrators to say, yet it really is the key to working with each other’s rhythms and respecting them.

At the end of the school year, it is beneficial for vice-principals to sit down and look at how they worked together all year. By reviewing times when they were synchronous with each other and times when they were not, they can plan for the year ahead by coming up with strategies to ride those waves.

5. Timing – Yes, it really is everything

Have you ever had a bad day and at 9 p.m. wanted to call your work partner to find out why they made that comment during a meeting eight hours ago? Don’t. Timing is everything in this job and much like letting your body get to know your work partner’s energy levels, your mind has to do the same.

My crisis may not be their crisis. Timing is about knowing when to give the other person space and when to give them attention. In our case, we both know if the phone rings at 9 p.m. at night, it is important.

After reflecting on our top five, we re-examined Dotan’s (2009) six factors for a successful working relationship. Many of our examples were similar to her research results with the exception of one category; instrumentability. Dotan defines this as an administrator’s ability to see opportunity in each other. If colleagues see each other as intelligent, competent and successful, then they are willing to align themselves with each other. Without being conscious of our actions, we realized we had been doing this from the beginning.

Conclusion

Educators spend a great deal of time talking about climate. It is important that schools need to be welcoming, safe and accepting places and that teachers demonstrate care, respect, trust and integrity for all students (*Ethical Standards of the Teaching Profession, OCT*). There is considerably

less attention paid to employee relationships. Instead, the business sector has invested time and money trying to figure out how to make their employees happy in order to increase production.

CEO Gary Kelly believes that workplace satisfaction must begin with the leaders modelling respectful, trusting, caring and fun relationships (Riordan, 2013). We did not spend time poring over business journals and decide to foster a healthy working relationship to ultimately “increase production.” We did not sit down and talk about climate and decide to model a healthy relationship for the sake of others. Instead, we focused on each other because both of our personalities value relationship. In the end, if our relationship helps others in our school foster healthy relationships, then we have been successful – because everyone deserves to be happy in their workplace. ▲

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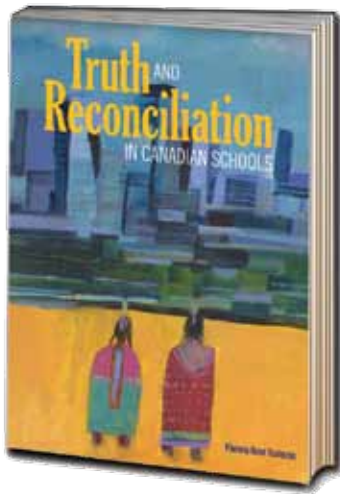


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Truth and Reconciliation in Canadian Schools: Providing authentic resources to school leaders

By Pamela Toulouse
Portage and Main Press
ISBN: 9781553797456
Reviewed by Mervi Salo

Ontario is home to large and diverse Indigenous communities that are growing at a rate that is more than four times that of non-Indigenous communities. Yet the number of students who identify as First Nation, Métis or Inuit are a

substantial under-representation of the true population, as many choose not to self-identify. This is the case – in part – because the conditions in schools are not culturally safe. A knowledge gap exists among staff about the histories, cultures and contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples in Canada. As a measure to address this, the Ontario Ministry of Education has asked school boards to enact the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action #62 and #63.

This is a challenge for many educators because many do not know what they are reconciling, and others fear making mistakes and misrepresenting information. In a new book, *Truth and Reconciliation in Canadian Schools*, author Pamela Toulouse addresses some of the educators' fears and provides a number of ways to begin with current and accurate information, lesson plans and suggestions of authentic resources and books that centre Indigenous voices. In addition, she encourages educators to establish relationships with Indigenous communities and to bring in various Indigenous re-

source people to share their knowledge (e.g., Elders, Knowledge Carriers).

The book is for teachers who are looking for ways to respectfully infuse Indigenous Education in the classroom. The author is Anishnawbe from Sagamok First Nation, presenting a (w)holistic approach to engaging in reconciliation activities. The first part of the book contains information about residential schools, treaty education, Indigenous history and contributions. The second part provides a series of three-part lessons by grade (K-12) including ideas for integrating the arts, literacy, physical education, science, geography and history that support Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners in the classroom. She also provides adaptations by subject, assessment and extension suggestions.

The book makes Indigenous Education accessible, while still advocating for Indigenous people to speak for themselves in the spirit of “Nothing About Us Without Us.” She provides information about the contributions, innovations and inventions of Indigenous peoples, educa-

tion in traditional societies, traditional values, self-government, wampum belts, pictographs, circle teachings and personal insights. This is a critical component of the resource that makes it stand out from others.

The message more educators need to hear is not only to teach students about cultural genocide and residential schools. Indigenous peoples are not victims first. Teachers should take the time to learn and teach their students about the many contributions, strengths and resilience of these many proud Nations. Educators need to remember that these are living cultures that are diverse and unique, and Toulouse shows educators some ways to do this that is beyond “token” activities (e.g., Indigenous people being positioned as objects and spectacles).

She asks, “What is truth? What is reconciliation? It is a personal look at what we know, what we don't know, and what we need to do to move forward respectfully. It means we go beyond guilt, shame, and anger to create educational spaces where our children and youth can grow together as healthy citizens.” ▲

Mervi Salo is a Centrally Assigned Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education - Toronto District School Board.

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Principals should be familiar with new practices and their effectiveness. With the volume of research that is constantly

being produced in academic settings, staying abreast of this information can be overwhelming.

One effort to assist school leaders in finding and using high-quality information is the Knowledge Network for Applied Educational Research (KNAER), a tri-partite project between the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Faculty of Education at Western and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Our most recent initiative has been the establishment of four thematic Knowledge Networks, based on the priorities outlined in the Ministry's "Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario" (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf).

One of the four networks is the Knowledge Network for Student Well-Being, developed by the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board in partnership with the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University.

The objective of the knowledge networks is to build an explicit bridge between the evidence of what works, and practices in the classroom. We work both to connect educators with evidence and connect researchers with important problems of practice that arise from the classroom. We want to provide educators with research they can use, and help researchers understand the

real-life questions that educators would like answered.

The Ministry's Well-Being Strategy (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/Wellbeing2.html) has four inter-connected elements: 1) safe and accepting schools, 2) positive mental health, 3) equitable and inclusive education and 4) healthy schools.

PREVNet (www.prevnet.ca) is a network of leading researchers and organizations helping students build safe relationships and working together for Safe and Accepting Schools. School Mental Health Assist (smh-assist.ca) is a provincial implementation support team designed to help school boards promote student mental health and well-being. The Social Planning Network of Ontario (www.spno.ca) is a network of community planning councils that highlight local knowledge about the impact of poverty on Equity and Inclusive Education. The Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition (www.ontariohealthyschools.com) supports the optimal health and learning of Ontario's children and youth.

The Knowledge Network for Student Well-Being has developed a series of research summaries titled "Research in Brief." These resources are based on reviews based on published research with pre-established criteria for the type and quality of studies that will be

included. Many systematic reviews focus on randomized controlled trials that are seen as the strongest type of study design. Systematic reviews may often include statements about how strong the evidence is, and whether the studies included in the review may be biased.

We take these 20+ page reviews and summarize them into one page, written in plain language for educators and parents to understand.

The Brief also includes a "Why Does This Matter?" section connecting the subject of the review to everyday challenges in the classroom.

Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning and Do the Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning Programs Last? were two Briefs included in the Leading Mentally Healthy Schools package distributed to principal across Ontario this year. Health Promoting Schools Framework for Improving Student Health and Well-Being and Effectiveness of School-Based Mental Health Services for Elementary School Children will be included in the second package out this fall.

A complete list of all of the Research in Brief summaries can be found on the KNAER Knowledge Hub (www.knaer-recrae.ca) or on the Ontario Education Research Exchange (oere.oise.utoronto.ca). ▲

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