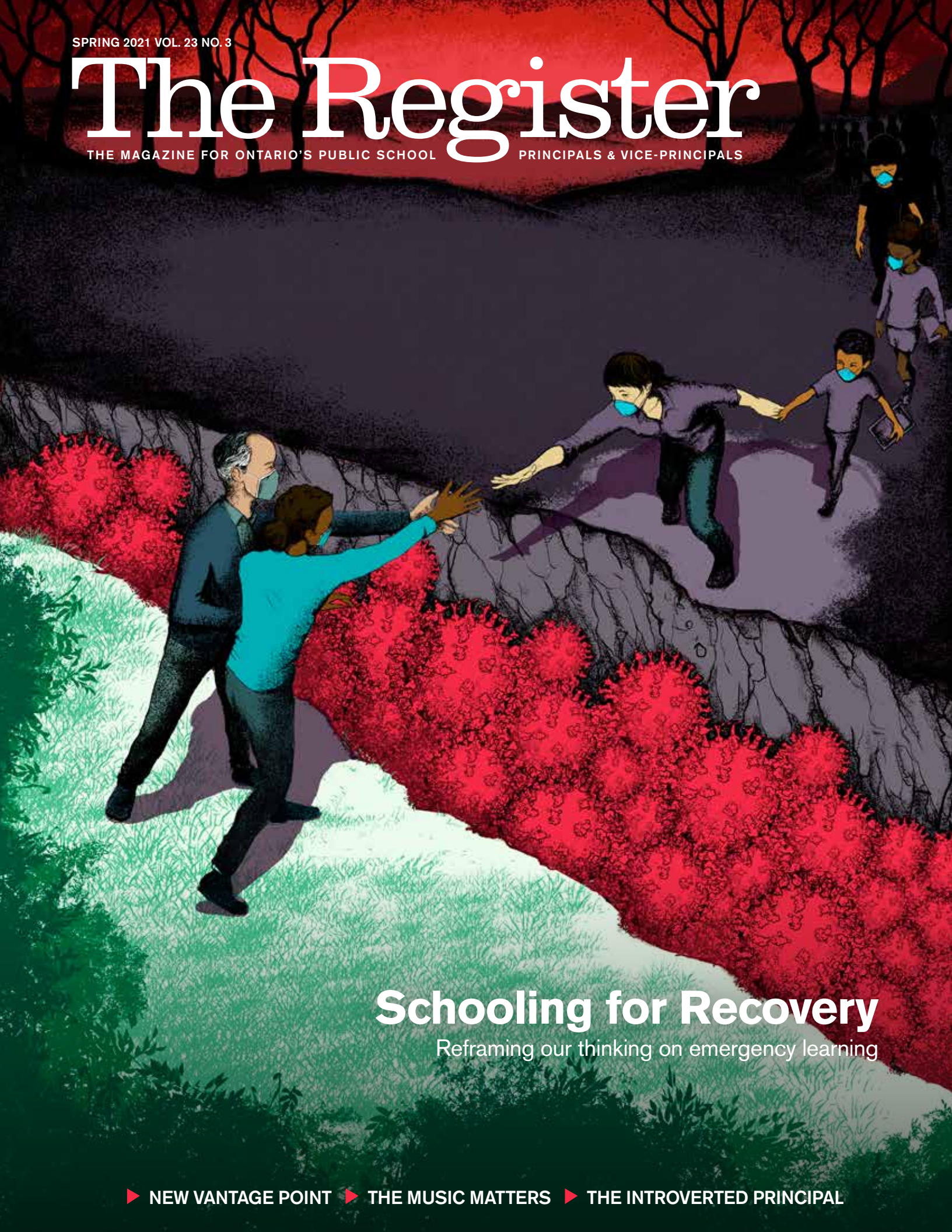


SPRING 2021 VOL. 23 NO. 3

# The Register

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



## Schooling for Recovery

Reframing our thinking on emergency learning

▶ NEW VANTAGE POINT ▶ THE MUSIC MATTERS ▶ THE INTROVERTED PRINCIPAL



# National Principal's

“Research has shown that,  
...investing in the principal is  
likely the most efficient way to  
affect student achievement.”  
The Wallace Foundation (February 2021)

#NationalPVPDay

# Day

On May 1 we celebrate, acknowledge and thank the principals and vice-principals who lead our schools every day.



**Gerry Smith** – Principal  
Sir William Osler Elementary  
Hamilton-Wentworth DSB



**Lisa MacDonald** – Principal  
Lakeroad Public School  
Lambton Kent DSB



**Hillary Freeburn**  
System Principal  
Superior-Greenstone DSB



**Lisa Edwards** – Principal  
Central Technical School  
Toronto DSB



**Taryn Vachon** – Vice-principal  
Red Lake District High School  
Keewatin-Patricia DSB



**Patsy Agard** – Principal  
Lisgar Collegiate Institute  
Ottawa-Carleton DSB



**Trent Carter-Edwards** – Principal  
Seaway District High School  
Upper Canada DSB



**Alexandra Milak** – Vice-principal  
Cundles Heights Public School  
Simcoe County DSB



**Rasha Balche** – Vice-principal  
Irma Coulson Public School  
Halton DSB



**Lorne Gretsinger** – Principal  
Oakridge Public School  
DSB Niagara



**Sooky Crljen** – Principal  
Wedgewood Junior Public School  
Toronto DSB



**Valerie Dumoulin** – Principal  
École Secondaire Cochrane H.S.  
DSB Ontario North East



**Jen Currie** – Principal  
Prince of Wales Public School  
DSB Niagara



**Courtney Chartrand** – Vice-principal  
Adam Scott CVI  
Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB



**Barry Promane** – Vice-principal  
Stratford District SS  
Avon Maitland DSB



**Seema Guram** – Principal  
Glen Ogilvie Public School  
Ottawa-Carleton DSB

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# Prioritizing Self-Care

Harmony has two parts



My hope for each of you, no matter your role this year, is that you are doing okay, have some strategies in place to support your well-being and remain optimistic about what lies ahead. You've been through a lot over the last two years.

Before the labour unrest of 2019–20 was settled, a pandemic became a part of our lives and remains so. Upheaval has had a big impact on our daily lives. Although we typically strive to see our students thrive, what we've actually been working on this past year is simply to stay connected and provide an education that can come as close as possible to our expected ideal.

As education leaders, we recognize that our well-being is important and deserves attention, but taking action to make it a priority may be a new focus that is as important now and into the future as it was months

ago. I know that work-life balance is a concept commonly floated around, but the reality, even when not leading through a pandemic, is that work-life balance is harder for some people to attain, yet efforts to find harmony may be within our reach. This congruity of needs, demands and choices is necessary. It isn't selfish to look after yourself; in fact, leadership is exemplified in demonstrating care and thus respect for oneself.

Commonly we equate self-care with time away from those who count on us. The biggest barrier is the guilt that we place on ourselves when we

contemplate taking our earned and deserved time off. We are who we are because we understand and believe in service to others. We believe that taking time for ourselves burdens others, because our positions can never remain vacant, and we are reluctant to contribute to the fatigue of our replacements. Instead of seeing this as a reciprocal act of well-being, we view it as burdensome. We deny ourselves the opportunity to harmonize our extensive commitment to our school communities with our need for commitment to ourselves and our families.

Self-care does not have to be the grand action of temporary departure. There are many things that we can do on a daily basis that boost our resilience. Make time for physical activity – that doesn't just mean regular walks through the halls of your school, even though that does help. Set limits. Go home at a reasonable time – you don't have to be the last one out the door. Recognize that you cannot always return every email and every call every day. Designate time during the evening and on weekends for you, to read, binge watch a series, take a nap, engage in online professional learning, try the activities available through Starling Minds or whatever gives you a sense of release, freedom or simple joy.

Finally, allow yourself to grieve. Grieve for what you had hoped would be, planned for and attempted. Forgive



yourself for not achieving the goals you had set months ago, recognizing that control was taken from you. Accept that the greatest accomplishment of the year was dealing with it day by day, whether you worked in a face-to-face format or the uncharted territory of long-term virtual learning. Celebrate the connections that you made and maintained.

Leading through the pandemic has been filled with uncertainty, fear, anxiety and isolation at times. You've done a fabulous job and that isn't surprising. But don't wait until July to look after yourself. The batteries need to be well charged now so that the summer months are maximized. Remember, harmony has at least two parts to it. ▲

We encourage you to take time to read the article on [Reframing Our Thinking on Emergency Learning on page 30](#) and our [Share Your Story submission on page 38](#).



**Ann Pace**

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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 [lromanese@principals.ca](mailto:lromanese@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:



**Note:** Unless otherwise indicated, percentages have been rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. All percentages and data referred to in this article are based on the OPC Members who responded to the Census, not on the entire membership.

# OPC Census Highlights

## Learning more about our membership

As members of the OPC Provincial Executive, we strive to learn from our membership every day. In 2019, Provincial Council established the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Committee to serve and advocate for our membership. To support this work, it was important that we gathered data for a clear picture of the diversity of our Members through a first-ever Census. Our goal was to use the Census to help refine our organizational focus on breaking down oppressive barriers and institutional structures. It would also be used to continue to support and provide world-class professional learning in equity, inclusion, anti-racism and anti-oppression.

### THE CENSUS

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The Census was conducted between October 12 and November 9, 2020. It was completed by 52% of our Members, which is significantly higher than any poll we have ever conducted in the past on various issues. A Census, however, would generally aim for a higher percentage of respondents. However, as a first-time project, and given

its timing during the pandemic when our Members were already overburdened with extra duties, we were pleased with the results.

The Census was designed with extensive consultation of our Executive, EDI Advisory Committee, Provincial Council and the Senior Staff team. Input, comment and review was also provided by Tana Turner of the Turner Consulting Group. Turner Consulting has worked with boards across the province

## The Census concluded by asking two open-ended questions, including how the OPC can best serve and advocate for our diverse membership.

to conduct Equity Audits and support their workplace equity, diversity and inclusion efforts. The question design was done purposefully to align with the Census of Canada, with a focus on the groups that the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment has identified as experiencing persistent and systemic discrimination in the labour market, with specific questions to illuminate not only representation, but also Members' experiences of harassment and discrimination by panel and region.

### WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT OUR MEMBERSHIP

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The Census results provided a picture of Members and their experiences that is complex, but also illuminating, allowing us to better understand Members' needs and help plan for continued growth in a way that best meets the constant changes of the principal/vice-principal role. The results will allow us to continue to engage with our membership to further refine and develop a plan to meet our future needs.

The majority (60%) of our Members are between 46 and 55 years of age, while 28% are age 45 and under. Those in the younger age bands are from more diverse backgrounds. Gender-wise, 67% of respondents identify as female and 32% as male. Fewer than 1% identify as transgender/non-binary or gender diverse. Almost 1% chose not to answer this question. A large majority – 92% – identify as heterosexual and 5% as LGBTQ2S+. Fewer than 3% of respondents chose not to answer this question.

A demographic overview of the OPC is important to provide a picture of our membership. What the Census told us is that the racial identity of school administrators\* is not reflective of the provincial population. Racialized people are underrepresented in our membership when compared to the Ontario 2016 population. While 29% of the Ontario population is racialized, only 18% of our membership re-

ported being racialized. Those with White/European origins make up 83% of our Members, compared to 68% of the Ontario population. North American Indigenous are slightly underrepresented as OPC Members compared to the provincial population (2.1% versus 2.8% respectively).

Racialized OPC Members are younger than their White colleagues, with 38% under the age of 45, compared to 27% of White Members. A little over half (52%) of White Members are 51+ years old, compared to 35% of racialized Members.

To identify barriers to advancement, the Member Census data was compared to occupational data captured in the Census of Canada by Statistics Canada.

Canada Census data shows that racialized people comprise 14% of Ontario's teachers. As this is the pool from which vice-principals and principals are drawn, at 18%, racialized people appear to be well represented among Members. However, there continues to be a significant gap in the racial diversity of teachers and school administrators compared with the diversity of Ontario's student population.

Seventy-five per cent of teachers are women, while only 67% of school administrators are women. On the flip side, men comprise 25% of all teachers, but make up 32% of school administrators.

The data also shows that Indigenous people are fairly well represented among school administrators compared to teaching staff. However, the accuracy of this comparison is unclear, as the Census of Canada data include not only teachers in Ontario's public school system, but also those who teach on reserve and in private schools.

The racial diversity gap between our membership and the provincial population, which is the most significant gap identified through this analysis, will remain or continue to grow if there is not a deliberate focus placed on diversifying the teacher workforce and supporting racialized teachers

The Census results provided a picture of Members and their experiences that is complex, but also illuminating, allowing us to better understand Members' needs and help plan for continued growth in a way that best meets the constant changes of the principal/vice-principal role.

to advance into school administrator positions. This is crucial given that Ontario's racialized population is growing at a faster rate than the total provincial population. Research has shown that all students benefit from having racialized teachers and school administrators, and that this exposure prepares students to work in a diverse province and global economy.

In terms of religious diversity, 60% of respondents identify as Christian, 29% report they are atheist or don't identify with a religion or faith and 8% observe a non-Christian religious tradition.

Eleven per cent of OPC Members reported having a disability, with close to half of these Members (48%) having a physical or health condition and 46% reporting a mental health disability.

The vast majority of Members (87%) reported that they were born in Canada, with 13% born outside of Canada. Of those born outside of Canada, the vast majority – 99% – reported being in Canada for more than 11 years. This reflects the number of years it takes to become an OCT-certified teacher in Canada and gain the experience and credentials to become a principal or vice-principal.

The information garnered from the Census around discrimination and harassment provide some disturbing results. Members were asked whether they have experienced discrimination and/or harassment in the past five years as a

principal or vice-principal. Thirteen per cent of all survey respondents have experienced discrimination or harassment based on race, colour, ancestry, ethnic origin or place of origin; 12% have experienced discrimination or harassment based on age; and 12% experienced discrimination attributed to sex, including pregnancy.

Another concern noted in the Census results is that 20% of Members reported experiencing discrimination or harassment for reasons other than the protected grounds of human rights. The greatest source of this discrimination or harassment was attributed to parents at 32%, followed by senior administration at 21% and school staff at 21%.

The Census concluded by asking two open-ended questions: How can the OPC best serve and advocate for our diverse membership? And what activities would you like to see the EDI Advisory Committee, through the OPC, undertake in the short term and long term?

The most requested activities from the list involved Professional Learning. Members believe it is important for all school administrators to develop their competence and confidence in addressing issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. Other suggested activities included

- engaging in advocacy efforts with a focus on addressing unfair work conditions
- advocating with school boards and the ministry to address the issues facing equity seeking groups, to increase diversity
- creating a Code of Conduct for parents, to address harassment
- advocating for policies to support Members accused of discrimination and harassment
- doing more to identify and address issues of equity and diversity within the OPC
- addressing issues such as pay equity and mentorship
- undertaking a public education campaign to support the profession and public education.

## NEXT STEPS

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Since the review of the data, the EDI Census sub-committee has had fruitful conversations with Tana Turner. We are continuing to more closely review the qualitative and quantitative data collected, conduct further analysis and probe



further to explore the different experiences by region and gender. The analysis has been worthwhile. Along with developing a deeper understanding, we were fortunate to be able to hear and learn from an expert like Tana. We are working on a series of recommendations to guide our work and focus our advocacy. We have committed to repeat the Census on a regular timeline to hear from and expand our knowledge of Members, and to use it as one measure of our progress.

While we have learned a great deal, we recognize that there is much more work ahead if we are to use the input provided in the Census to help us create and address the needs of a more diverse membership, while also supporting our Members to better serve an increasingly diverse population. ▲

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Lorne Gretsinger is principal at Oakridge Public School in the District School Board of Niagara and vice-president with the OPC Provincial Executive.

\* Since 2007, when the United Nations suggested that Canada should reconsider using the term “visible minorities,” the Ontario Human Rights Commission has suggested the use of the term “racialized people.” This term recognizes that race is a social construct. This means that society forms ideas of race based on geographical, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors, as well as physical traits, even though none of these can be used to justify racial superiority or racial prejudice.



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# New Vantage Point

One vice-principal's valuable  
lessons on leading through  
adversity

By Meghan Smelow

Illustration by Sandra Dionisi









Sometimes the best lessons in life occur when they are least expected. In the fall of 2019, I was appointed to the role of vice-principal at a secondary school of approximately 670 students in Thunder Bay and partnered with a former teaching colleague, a new principal himself. The school is 11 years old and is home to a diverse student body, including many Indigenous students of First Nation, Métis and Inuit backgrounds, as well as several English Language Learners. As an urban school, it also offers a full range of academic and vocational programming, including the International Baccalaureate (IB), and administers a number of off-site Alternative Education programs.

Becoming a secondary school administrator had been a long-term goal, and I was thrilled to finally put my leadership skills to use in a new and exciting way. Despite 20 years of teaching/leadership experience working as an IB Teacher, Department Head and Curriculum Project Leader, nothing could have adequately prepared me for becoming a vice-principal in the 2019–2020 school year, particularly as I began in an acting role.

In a year of labour action and sanctions, followed by COVID-19, it was daunting to comprehend the amount of new learning necessary to becoming an effective school administrator, as well as to become adept at making timely, often difficult decisions. Despite my confidence in my personal traits, skills and leadership background, the experience of starting as a new administrator in such challenging times was unexpected and provided me with valuable lessons which may not have been learned as quickly, or as deeply, had circumstances been “normal.” I will share some of those lessons.

## LESSON 1

### **Establish a strong vision for the school and for yourself. Do not lose sight of those goals.**

As a new vice-principal, the importance of understanding your role on the administrative team is critical. Understanding your strengths and how you are able to contribute to the effectiveness of the team will help solidify your vision and hopefully be shared in the initial team meetings. Given that my principal and myself were both newly appointed, we wisely spent time identifying how we would proceed together. We welcomed our new adventure with optimism. Having previously worked together as teaching colleagues who shared mutual beliefs centred on students, we had already established trust and mutual respect, both of which still form the foundation of our relationship as we move through our second year as a team.

From the start, it was decided a collaborative approach would allow us to use our strengths and afford us opportunities to grow as leaders. As a vice-principal, I was pleased to be included as a partner in all discussions, and my training continued as I was introduced to new responsibilities. My teaching background was heavily rooted in instructional leadership – an area where I felt I could contribute. Establishing a shared vision for the school was our top priority. This led to many early discussions centred on plans to foster a climate of equity, inclusion and a culture of high expectations. This included focusing on our school's approach to professional learning, building on the strong belief that both the principal and vice-principal play a significant role in setting the tone. In order to model the school culture we wanted to create and maintain, we were determined to lead by example, learning alongside our staff. The approach centred on providing cross-curricular professional learning for adult learners, and we enthusiastically initiated self-directed PLCs based on needs expressed by staff. This work allowed me to establish relationships with staff and gave them insight into my leadership style. Questions as to where we were headed as a school with our approach to professional learning were often directed to me, given my recent proximity to the classroom.

Job sanctions then interrupted our normal school days, followed by the onset of the pandemic, and we were forced to change or pause some of the things we were trying to do. Ensuring that we frequently revisited our vision and goals throughout these difficult times, while remaining responsive to the needs of our students, staff and school community, was an important lesson to functioning effectively as a team. We have learned to be patient and adjust

our action plans and timelines to suit the current context. However, we frequently return to a discussion about the direction we want to head in the long-term. To maintain our sense of purpose and reduce the feeling of isolation as administrators, we have engaged in professional learning through webinars, workshops and an informal leadership book club with administrators in nearby boards.

The need to continue learning and growing in our roles has not stopped as a result of leading through the pandemic, but has actually become more urgent. We have adapted to changing circumstances in a way that continues to honour our shared vision of school improvement while driving a culture of high expectations for all. While it is easy to become disillusioned when things do not proceed according to plan, deep satisfaction comes from celebrating small wins along the way and knowing that long-term goals are still within sight.

## LESSON 2

### **You are only as effective as the people around you – grow and value relationships above all else.**

The success of our vision for the school was predicated on the forging and growing of relationships with all members of our school community. Taking the time to pop into classes and have conversations about what students are learning are regular practices. Similarly, we placed great

**While it is easy to become *disillusioned* when things do not proceed according to plan, deep satisfaction comes from celebrating small wins along the way and knowing that long-term goals are still within sight.**

value on getting to know our staff on a more personal level, whether through informal chats in the hallway, or coming together to share a meal on PA days or special occasions, before the pandemic struck.

As a new vice-principal, I learned quickly that the nature of my relationships with staff had changed. While I should have expected this, I was caught off-guard by how lonely it was to no longer be part of the camaraderie of the teaching profession. Hearing the laughter from the staff room while I sat and ate lunch alone in my office, I knew things had changed.

During this early transition to administration, I sought the advice of a recently retired valued colleague and friend. She wisely told me that the most important person in my professional life was going

to be my admin partner, and that I should prioritize and nurture that relationship by regularly taking time to have lunch together or find time to vent, laugh and talk about life. This proved to be extremely timely advice, for once the realization dawned that schools would be closing their doors and shifting to virtual learning, the prospect of maintaining relationships and reducing the feeling of isolation was an even more pressing need.

The new challenge for us became one of leading from a distance to ensure that we as a staff were still a community. Feeling connected as a staff seemed a difficult proposition, but we worked hard to maintain relationships by bringing everyone together throughout the closure period in virtual staff meetings, professional learning sessions and phone calls. Similarly, it was incumbent on us as administrators to work with our students and their families to preserve our sense of community. Many hours were spent responding via email and telephone to parental concerns and

staying in touch with students through our online communication platform.

I became very aware of the importance of our leadership and role-modelling. Dealing on a daily basis with unexpected issues, we wanted to keep our

school together, while recognizing when it was becoming difficult for the students and staff and considering how to provide support. We worked to be in tune with, and receptive to, the needs, struggles, frustrations and isolation of our students and families. When difficulties with online learning were too great, we came up with creative solutions to ensure that learning would continue.

We connected students who were struggling with mental health issues exacerbated by lockdown isolation with social work support and established a student recognition initiative to celebrate the ongoing efforts of student perseverance. It became profoundly evident to both the principal and me during this period that schools are far more than bricks and mortar, how deeply our staff missed their students and each other and how much students missed the sense of community and belonging that school provides. It has been perhaps my most significant learning as an educator.

### LESSON 3

#### **Communication is key, so listen more and talk less.**

With the chaos of the pandemic, effective communication is critical for school administrators as a team. Establishing open and honest

communication between us has enabled us to pull together to make important decisions affecting our students and staff. As partners, we exchange thoughts and opinions freely, seeking each other's input on many decisions, using each other's strengths to function as a cohesive unit. This type of reciprocal communication has been one of the keys to our success as a team, and has allowed me to feel valued and respected in my role and feel that I have a voice.

Providing timely and clear communication with staff, students and families has become vital to ensuring that everyone feels supported and informed. Leading from a distance, I've seen the need for the principal and me to be flexible and have a clear willingness to listen. The greatest need of parents, students and staff has been to connect with someone who actually listened to questions when they arose, and worked with them to help solve problems.

By being an effective listener, I am able to give voice to the myriad stories of our students and families, particularly those who have been marginalized by a variety of circumstances and realities, and who may have growing mental health concerns including social anxiety. Understanding that each member of our school community has experienced this unusual time in a different way has been another important lesson about the need to listen with empathy. Taking the time to learn how to frame difficult conversations and listen deeply has been a significant part of my experience, and will continue to become stronger with my time in administration.

With the COVID-19 pandemic dominating our school year, our work remains challenging and fraught with unforeseen dilemmas. My principal and I continue to work at staying true to ourselves and our goals. Prioritizing student and staff mental health, creating opportunities and conditions necessary for self-directed professional learning, working to effectively listen in our communication strategy and finding creative ways to maintain a sense of community have become key pillars of our work moving forward.

Throughout this experience, I've learned that it is important to understand who you are as a leader, your strengths and what you hope to learn in the role.

When I began, I was worried I would not know all the legislated responsibilities of administrators, but I have become comfortable in these areas through the guidance of my principal and through working closely with experienced staff. Identifying your areas for learning and planning with your principal as to how to see those goals to their fruition will help to establish clear direction and contribute to your personal and professional growth, particularly as unexpected challenges arise. Understanding that the nature of some relationships will change and accepting the new boundaries that define your relationships will help you to seek out colleagues to form a new circle of support, friendship and growth. Becoming



a strong communicator and a skilled listener with your principal, staff, students and their families is critical.

The trials of 2019-2020 as a new vice-principal were certainly challenging and required significant positive energy. I am thankful for having an administrative partner that mentored my knowledge and skills, honoured and respected my voice, yet knew how to provide me with the experiences I needed to grow in my leadership. ▲

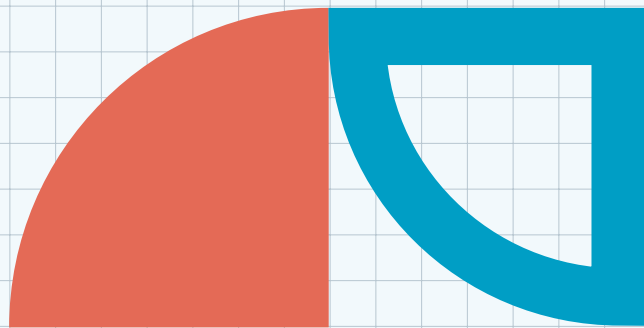
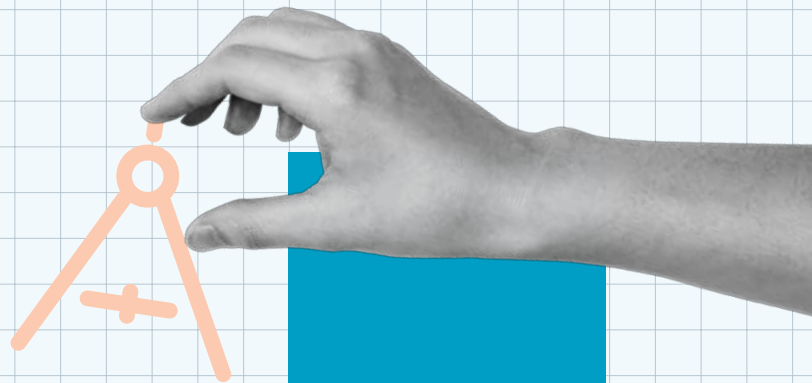
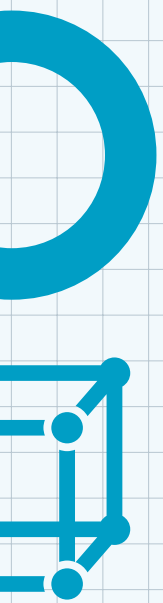
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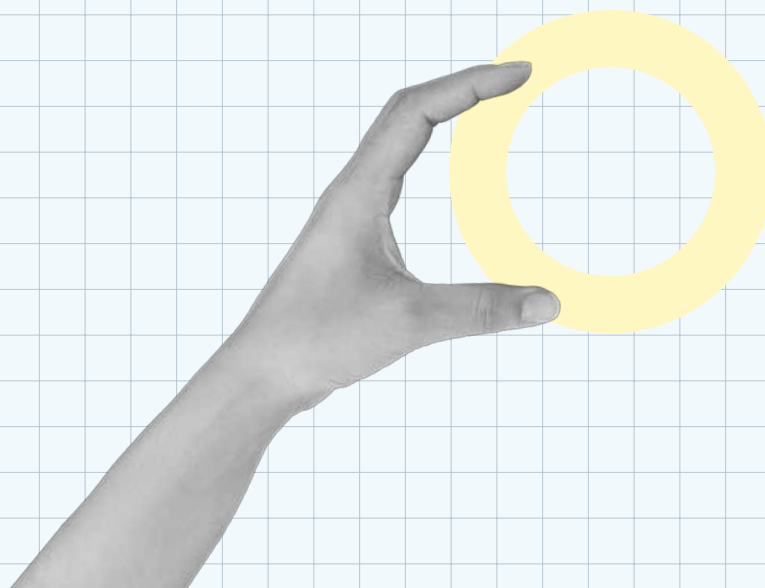
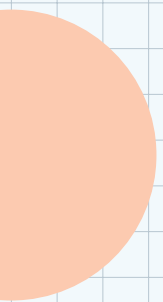


D E R N I Z I N G

M A T H

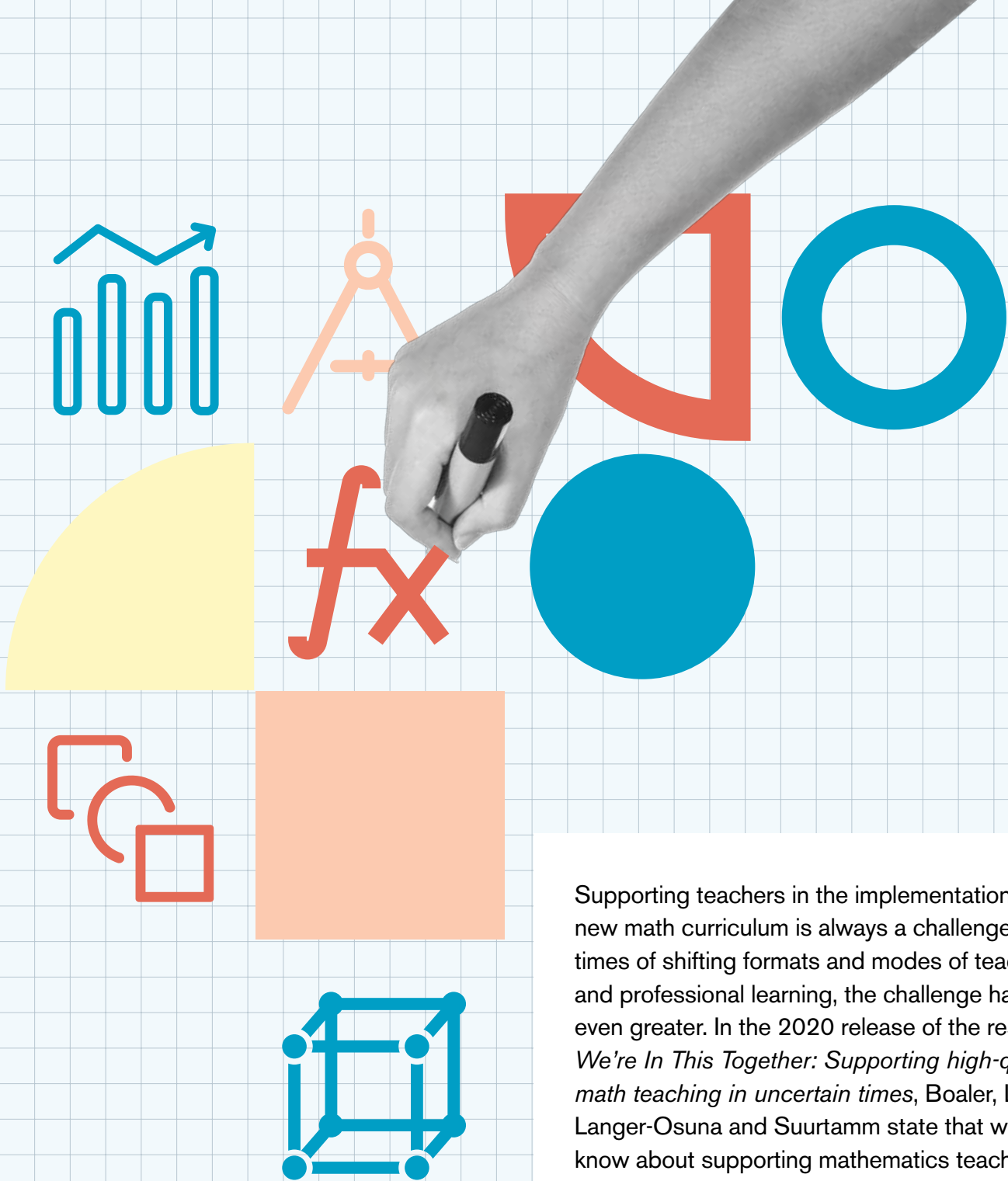
Supporting teachers in  
implementing new math curricula

By Dr. Christine Suurtamm



$fx$





Supporting teachers in the implementation of a new math curriculum is always a challenge, but in times of shifting formats and modes of teaching and professional learning, the challenge has been even greater. In the 2020 release of the resource *We're In This Together: Supporting high-quality math teaching in uncertain times*, Boaler, Lamar, Langer-Osuna and Suurtamm state that what we know about supporting mathematics teaching and learning still stands, even if it might look slightly different in these uncertain and shifting times.

In Ontario, curriculum changes are occurring in both the elementary and secondary math courses. For elementary teachers and administrators, we are in the midst of the first year of implementation of the new math curriculum. For secondary school mathematics teachers and administrators, September 2021 will see the implementation of the new Grade 9 curriculum. It is important to recognize that the implementation of a new curriculum is a journey rather than an event, and may continue over several years. A new curriculum provides new op-

portunities, but also raises questions for administrators about ways to best support teachers with implementation. While this article will highlight examples from the new elementary curriculum, the messages about implementation are also relevant for secondary principals.

In 2010, professor [Bongani D. Bantwini, reminded us](#) that teachers need support in a variety of ways as they take on the complex task of implementing new curriculum. There are many different new knowledges that teachers will engage in. Some of these are about the structure of the curriculum and resources that support it. Others are connected to new content areas, or new approaches to familiar content. Knowledge of curriculum structure and content may be able to be supported through workshops, webinars, videos and print resources. However, the major learning for teachers occurs when they transform a new curriculum into what it might look like in their own classrooms. Bantwini further conveyed that when teachers implement a new curriculum, they themselves engage in a true action-oriented inquiry and require support, dialogue with colleagues, time and access to resources to support their work. The following sections highlight some of the aspects of the new curriculum,

such as structure and content, as well as ways to support teachers in its implementation.

### Curriculum Structure

There are many features of the new Ontario math curriculum that are familiar to teachers. For instance, it is organized by strands, includes the mathematical processes, contains overall and specific expectations and has many of the same topics. As suggested by John Robert Rose in his 2015 doctoral dissertation, *The Australian national curriculum: Perspectives of teachers and school administrators on issues and concerns surrounding implementation*, these familiar features help with implementation, as the greater the compatibility between the new curriculum and the old, the smoother the transition from one to the other.

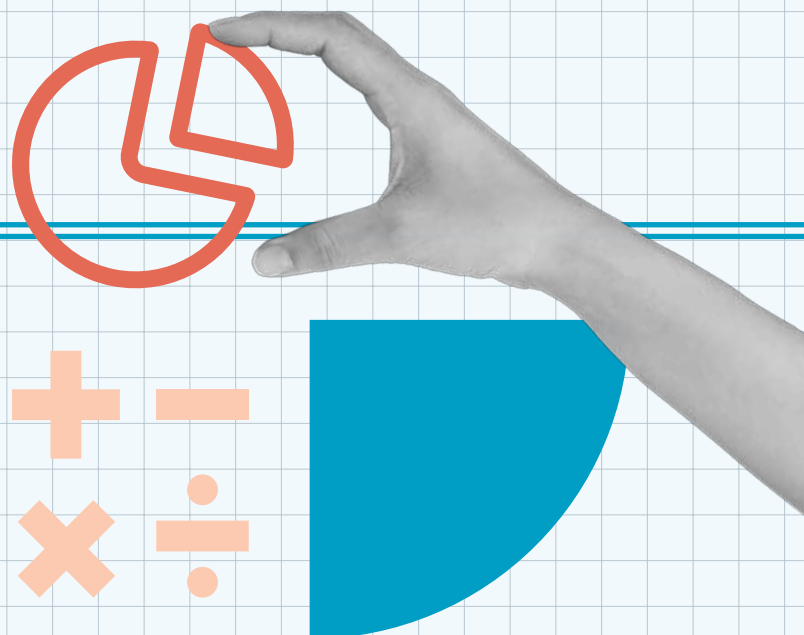
There are also some new features in the structure of the curriculum that support teachers with its implementation. The digital format and the many linked teacher supports – such as views of learning continua, a glossary, key concepts per grade, sample tasks and sample long-range plans – provide “one stop shopping” to teachers, rather than teachers having to visit a variety of websites to find information and ideas to support implementation. The use of the digital format

not only helps to organize all the supports in one place, but it also provides the opportunity for new resources to be added over time. Thus, the curriculum and its support are dynamic rather than static.

Teachers find these supports useful as they plan. For instance, there are several different ways that one can view the curriculum expectations. One is similar to the previous curriculum, with the expectations organized by grade and strand. But teachers can also see a strand overview that displays related specific expectations across grades 1–8, or a grade comparison that shows the continuum across three grades – the grade that is currently being taught as well as the grades before and after (see Figure 1).

These types of learning continua help teachers in a variety of ways, such as differentiating learning, examining necessary prior learning or designing lessons for a split grade class. The continua also provide ways for teachers to discuss how to support the development of math concepts across grades, to differentiate an activity across grades, try it out in different classrooms and work together to examine student work.

Resources such as the [Ontario sample long range plans](#) provide teachers with ideas on how



## FIRST AND FOREMOST,

we need to recognize that implementing a new curriculum takes time. Trying out new ideas in classrooms also requires a safe and collegial environment.

to put the curriculum into action. The variety in the long-range plans, such as by topic or important questions, demonstrates different ways that curriculum expectations could be woven together to form a coherent curriculum. They also demonstrate the emphasis that the messages in the curriculum context, reporting policies and sample tasks and plans place on connecting mathematical ideas across strands through cross-strand teaching and activities, as well as connecting mathematically to students' experiences.

### Curriculum Content

Much of the mathematics content within the

elementary math curriculum looks familiar to teachers. Two new strands have been added: *Social Emotional Learning*, and *Financial Literacy*. A difference from the 2005 curriculum is that measurement and geometry now fall under a new strand of *Spatial Sense*. In terms of curriculum expectations, much of the content is familiar. However, even for the familiar content, it may be taught at different grades or with a different approach or sequencing. For instance, teachers may find a different approach to fractions in the primary grades. Work with integers in the late junior and intermediate grades may have shifted to

begin in earlier grades and include the ordering of integers, basic operations with integers, solving simple equations and using integers in some simple patterning problems. A focus on critical thinking in data literacy is another emphasis. Changes such as these are based on current research that has emerged in the past 15 years, as well as comparisons with curricula from other high-performing jurisdictions (Suurtamm & McKie, 2019).

Several new topics have caught teachers' attention. When the curriculum was first revealed, coding rose to the surface as a new focus for which teachers felt they needed

FIGURE 1

### Grade Comparison for Data Collection and Organization (Grade 4)

GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5
<p><b>D1.1</b> sort sets of data about people or things according to two and three attributes, using tables and logic diagrams, including Venn, Carroll, and tree diagrams, as appropriate</p>	<p><b>D1.1</b> describe the difference between qualitative and quantitative data, and describe situations where each would be used</p>	<p><b>D1.1</b> explain the importance of various sampling techniques for collecting a sample of data that is representative of a population</p>
<p><b>D1.2</b> collect data through observations, experiments, and interviews to answer questions of interest that focus on qualitative and quantitative data, and organize the data using frequency tables</p>	<p><b>D1.2</b> collect data from different primary and secondary sources to answer questions of interest that involve comparing two or more sets of data, and organize the data in frequency tables and stem-and-leaf plots</p>	<p><b>D1.2</b> collect data, using appropriate sampling techniques as needed, to answer questions of interest about a population, and organize the data in relative-frequency tables</p>

Source: [Curriculum and Resources, Government of Ontario.](#)



training, support and resources. Many resources became available including webinars, videos, mini-courses and activities. Discussions with mathematics leadership teams across the province demonstrate that teachers are gaining access to these resources through many synchronous and asynchronous online platforms. Teachers also had to determine where to begin with the topic of coding, as they could not assume that the students could jump right in to the grade level expectations without the coding skills from previous grades.

Mathematical modelling is another topic that is new. This engages students in rich, messy problems that cross strands, and helps students develop the modelling process of analyzing situations, collecting and organizing information and creating a workable solution to address the messy problem. Many resources have been developed to help teachers understand this process and find modelling problems for students to work with. One source of resources for both coding and mathematical modelling is through the [Ontario Association for Mathematics Education](#).

### Putting the Curriculum into Action

Implementing a new math curriculum goes well beyond becoming familiar with the structure and content. The real learning comes as teachers put together their new knowledge from these various resources into their classroom planning and practice. Translating the written curriculum into an enacted one takes time, resources and support. Administrators can support teachers in a variety of ways as they engage in this action-oriented inquiry process.

First and foremost, we need to recognize that implementing a new curriculum takes time. Trying out new ideas in classrooms also requires a safe and collegial environment. Teachers require a safe space to test out new ideas, and to develop their pedagogical and mathematical knowledge, much as we strive to set up safe spaces for students to develop their mathematical knowledge within classrooms. Also, just as classrooms are made up of students who are at different points in their learning

and their needs are addressed through differentiated learning, school staffs are made up of teachers who are in different places in terms of their comfort with mathematics content and their repertoire of pedagogical practices, and each has different needs. For each, we need to start where they are.

In *Teachers of mathematics working and learning in collaborative groups: The twenty-fifth ICMI study*, Borko & Potari (2020) suggest that teachers also need opportunities to work together to make sense of the curriculum and to consider how best to implement it in their classroom. Research suggests that much of teachers' professional learning occurs through dialogue and collaboration with colleagues. Finding ways to provide time and space for teachers to work together to co-plan, explore resources, develop appropriate tasks, discuss new documents and examine student thinking is crucial. Time together to make sense of what this curriculum looks like in classrooms is key to transitioning to its implementation.

Teachers need to speak with colleagues teaching the same grade as well as neighbouring grades to determine how they will facilitate new approaches or new content in each grade when students may not have the prerequisite knowledge from the previous grade in the current curriculum. Adjustments need to be made to recognize that learning needs to begin where students are.

Furthermore, we need to remember that what we know about sound teaching and learning in mathematics still prevails. Students need opportunities to engage in meaningful tasks, have the opportunity to discuss mathematical ideas with classmates and have time to consolidate their learning. The 2020 resource document *High-Impact Instructional Practices in Mathematics*, released by the Ontario Ministry of Education, is a brief document, based on research, that accompanies the elementary mathematics curriculum and provides guidance to teachers about pedagogical practices that are effective in implementing it. The document is also useful to both elementary and secondary administrators to use in conversations with teachers. A series of videos that accompanies

the document helps educators see what these practices might look like in classrooms.

### A Final Takeaway

Implementing a new mathematics curriculum is a complex process that presents opportunities and challenges. Professional learning needs to be multi-pronged to address the variety in types of learning that teachers need to engage in. Some support will come through resources available with the curriculum, webinars and videos. These will help to support learning about new structures and content. However, administrators need to consider other supports that include time and space for teachers to work collaboratively to translate their learning and the curriculum into sound and meaningful mathematics learning in their classrooms. ▲

**More resources to support administrators with the implementation of the math curriculum in their schools can be found on the OPC website under [Professional Learning and Math Curriculum](#).**

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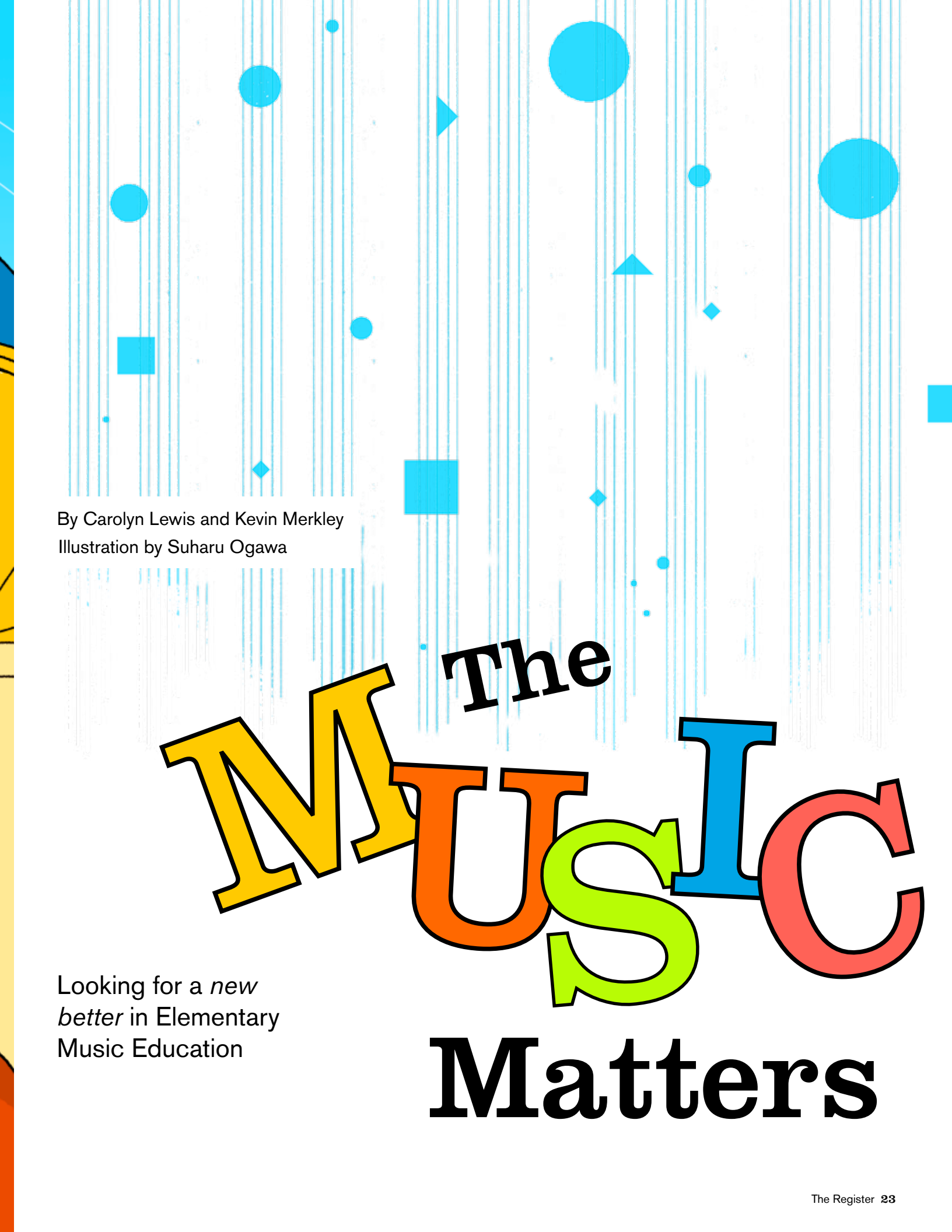
✉ Christine.Suurtamm@uottawa.ca

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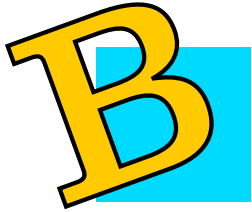
By Carolyn Lewis and Kevin Merkle  
Illustration by Suharu Ogawa

The  
**MUSIC**

Looking for a *new  
better* in Elementary  
Music Education

**Matters**





efore the pandemic, music programs invigorated our schools. They provided a sense of community, a joy and energy that sparked life in a school and helped students connect to their school and sense of self. Students could be heard singing, playing instruments and responding to music using a myriad of tools. They shared a sense of connection and pride through music.

Creativity abounded throughout our school buildings. Music-making provided the creative and critical thinking learning opportunities so valued by many. Since the onset of this pandemic, and the difficulties around music programming within a COVID-19 landscape, music educators have had to work very hard to maintain this level of energy, positivity, enthusiasm and educational experiences to the best of their ability – despite the restrictions imposed by boards responding to public health recommendations.

### Music Education in the Pandemic

There are three factors that impact a high-quality music program in our elementary schools: an inspired, qualified Music Educator; a supportive school administrator; and a school community to support the Music Educator.

Since school closures in March 2019, the demands on school administrators and our staff have been great. In many areas of the province, the loss of wind and brass instruments, singing and other instrumentally-based music programs in our schools has been evident. Music teachers have demonstrated diligence, dedication and creativity in the relentless pursuit of providing a rich musical learning environment for their students while keeping them safe.

Due to the challenges of navigating education during a pandemic, music teachers have been redeployed, are teaching homerooms or have minimal time with students to teach music programs. The new reality is that staff numbers in-school have been minimized, and/or students have been organized into

cohorts. In some boards, music rooms are idle with instruments sitting on shelves. In others, music rooms are being used for the storage of extra desks or are vacant due to the fact that students and their families have chosen to move to virtual classrooms.

Depending on location, some boards are permitting instrument playing with safety protocols in place, while others are not allowing any playing or singing as a result of advice from local public health organizations.

It has been a challenge for our passionate and creative music educators who understand the power music has for the well-being of students. It has been difficult for some students to adjust to being in school where their love of music has been removed or diminished as a result of new safety protocols.

The Vol. 12, No. 1 issue of *The Register* included an article by Terry Sefton and Jonathan Bayley called “Stop calling it ‘Prep!’”, highlighting their research on the implementation of the revised Arts Curriculum, noting that, “principals have a vital role to play in offering leadership and support for their staff.”

This statement is more important than ever, and as educators we need to give some serious thought to how we are going to re-engage our music programs, re-inspire our music specialists and ensure that the structures and processes (staffing, timetables, room allocation, maintenance and purchasing of instruments and materials) will best support our music programs in returning to a “new better” for music education.

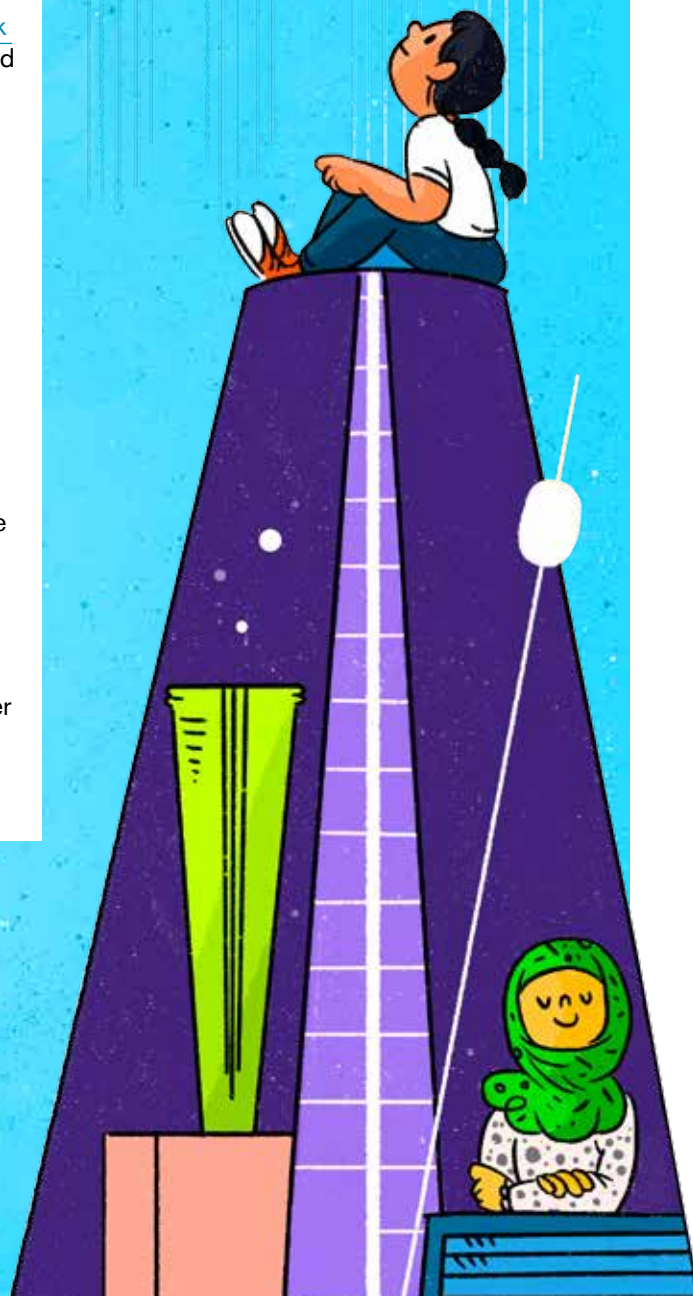
### Mental Health and Well-being of Students, Schools and Communities

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, people from around the world joined together, through music and the arts, to feel part of a community and to calm the stressful effects of the ever-growing pandemic. The idea that music and the arts have become the “antidote” for the pandemic is obvious, and why students absolutely need to continue to have access to these valuable learning opportunities when they return to school. We know that some students may have experienced loss, grief, trauma, or other mental health challenges.

## Supports Available for Administrators

The [Ontario Music Educators' Association](#) has a group of current elementary and secondary administrators who are available to provide support in returning your school to a “new better” as boards and schools continue to plan for music education in schools. The OMEA Administrator Advisory Council (AAC) is willing and available to work together to find viable solutions for this important work to maintain the rich, creative, collaborative musical experiences and cultural learning so important in children's education. Below are some recommended supports that are available:

- The Ontario Music Educators' Association [A Framework for The Return to Music Classes in 2020-21](#) was created to assist boards in planning the safe return to music classes and is available in English and French. It is also available through the OMEA website [omea.on.ca](http://omea.on.ca). This document is reviewed and updated periodically as new information becomes available.
- Timetabling: Contact members of the Ontario Music Educators' Association Administrator Advisory Council (AAC) are available to assist and provide guidance to school boards with regards to timetabling Music Education. Contact [aac@omea.on.ca](mailto:aac@omea.on.ca).
- Music consultants within school boards: Consult with school board Music instructional program leaders/ consultants/teacher leaders, and administrators who are former music educators to seek advice and guidance. Refer to [Recommended Elementary Instructional Practices and Time Allocation Guidelines: The Arts](#) for further information.
- Consult with colleagues in administration who are former music teachers who will be able to support you in creating a “new better.”



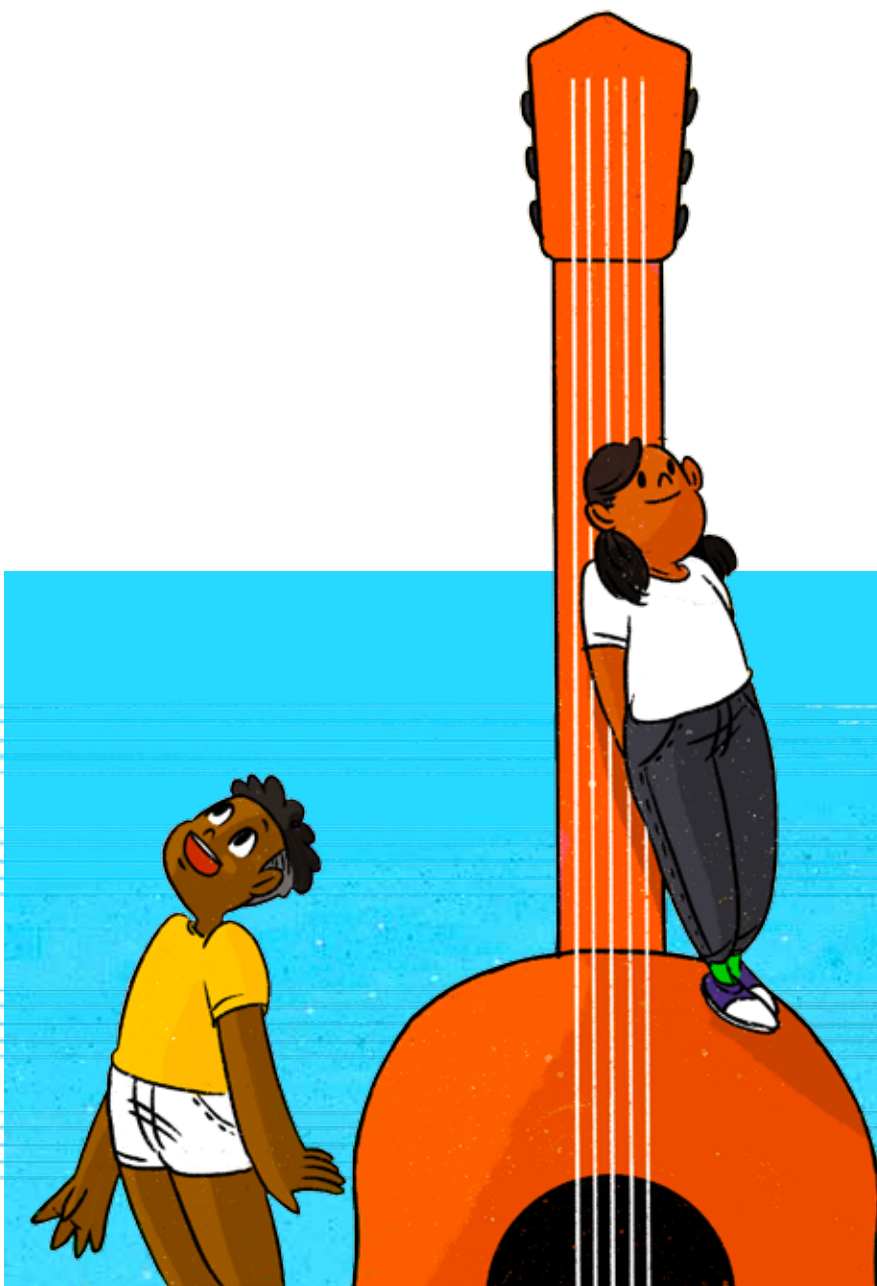
In addition to the intrinsic benefits of studying music, there is a vast range of other skills, attitudes and ways of seeing and thinking that are supported through music education. Connections to overall academic success have been noted, and the Critical and Creative processes, cornerstones of The Ontario Arts Curriculum, support 21st Century skills in critical thinking, creativity and collaboration.

### Return to Making Music

During the summer of 2020, the Ontario Music Educators' Association created, [A Framework for The Return to Music Classes in 2020-21](#). This resource has drawn upon leading research and recommendations for how music curriculum can be delivered within the parameters provided by school boards, informed by the recommendations of local public health agencies. This docu-

ment remains the most current and is updated when new information and research becomes available. The OMEA continues to pursue discussions with the government and health officials across the province to move forward with safe music learning in our schools.

Currently, most overall expectations in music can be met without the use of instruments in both the elementary and second-



### In the words of students

The Ontario Music Educators' Association, the subject association that represents Music Education and Educators in Ontario, sought input from students across Ontario as to the impact that the lack of music and musical experiences during the pandemic has had on their learning, school experiences and well-being.

In the voice of Ontario students:



ary Arts Curriculum. Learning how to code without being able to use a computer is also possible, but having a computer (or tool) to apply your knowledge is essential. The same is the case for music, which does require a variety of tools – such as instruments – to fully express oneself and to fully engage with the Ontario curriculum.

The July 2020 Hospital for Sick Kids report, [COVID-19: Guidance for School ReOpening](#), recommended that given the current situation to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, playing wind instruments or singing should not be permitted until such time as we are able to safely return to these activities, depending upon local considerations, space and adherence to safety protocols.

When we are able to return to making music, in what will be our “new normal,” as school and system leaders our greatest influence in impacting the quality of opportunities available to our students as they engage in music education is through staffing and

timetabling. When staffing, engaging current staff who have the musical background, qualifications and the ability to inspire our students should be a priority to ensure quality programming and community building.

Principals may also have the ability to hire a new staff member who brings this skill-set to our schools. We also want to ensure we allocate enough time to allow music-making to flourish. The Arts Education Consultants of Ontario has published [Recommended Elementary Instructional Practices and Time Allocation Guidelines: The Arts](#), which provides school leaders with all of the instructional and time allocation considerations needed for planning and implementation of elementary music and the arts. This document can support administrators in renewing music programs to create a “new better” for students and the entire school community.

The [2018 People for Education Arts Report](#) “emphasizes continuing deficits and inequities in the music education offered to the

children of Ontario, while at the same time offering at least a glimmer of hope that better things may be on the horizon” ([Concern and Hope: An Ontario Music Educators’ Association response to the 2018 People for Education Arts Report](#)). People for Education notes that the percentage of schools indicating that they have a qualified music teacher delivering the music program is up slightly from 41 per cent to 46 per cent, but also indicates 40 per cent of students have no music instruction at all in their school day, qualified or unqualified (Concern and Hope, 2018).

This pandemic has had a significant impact on how schooling has been offered to our students. Our teachers and systems have demonstrated flexibility and innovation. As leaders, we have an opportunity, and an obligation, to ensure we are seeking out music specialists who can inspire our students, as well as further develop critical thinking and creativity skills and additionally bring our communities together when schools return to a “new” normal.

*I like being able to hear me and all my classmates playing a song with just our instruments. It is so amazing that with music class we are able to truly CREATE music!*

*Music is the sound of a community coming together to perform a piece.*

*Music lets me make friends, cooperate, coordinate, be a part of something, push myself, learn team ethic.*

*It helps me calm down and enjoy the beauty of music in all genres.*

*Making music at school helps me focus and sometimes relax. Having music class or band helps me forget about my worries because my energy is going towards focusing on playing the music. Playing music at school always boosts my mood.*

*Making music in school is one of my creative outlets. When I play it gives me the chance to express my creativity.*

*Music takes my mind off anything stressful happening in another class or outside of school. It helps me stay calm, cool and collected.*

*From music I learn and feel happy.*

## Conclusion

Music Education is going to be needed more than ever once all our students return to our buildings, following what has been a challenging year in 2020–21. Music is part of who we are as humans. It is rooted deep within the identities of the students we serve and it connects students, schools and communities together as they learn and grow. Let us ensure that our engaging and creative music programs not only return to a “new normal,” but are revitalized to create a “new better!”▲

Carolyn Lewis recently retired as a principal with the Halton District School Board and is currently the president of the Ontario Music Educators' Association (OMEA).

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Kevin Merkley is currently principal at Stonebridge Public School in the York Region District School Board. He is the director for the Administrator Advisory Council on the Ontario Music Educators' Association (OMEA) board and is also the Secretary for Musicfest Canada.

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🐦 [@OMEAOntario](https://twitter.com/OMEAOntario)

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# Summer Opportunities

Professional learning doesn't take a break

**O**ur Professional Learning Team is committed to developing and delivering programming that is relevant to the work of administrators and responsive to a variety of needs and interests. To that end, through the winter months we offered a variety of learning sessions. We partnered with CPCO and ADFO as part of ministry funded projects, including [Supporting Student Mental Health](#), [Implementation of the elementary math curriculum](#) and [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#). Most of our OPC specific sessions, such as our moderated interview webinar on documentation, are [archived](#) for Members to view.

Since the [ICP Conference](#) has been moved to July 2022, we have decided to follow our usual practice of preparing [summer learning](#) opportunities. The topics for these sessions are based on feedback collected throughout the year and input from our Professional Learning Focus Group. Through these virtual sessions, principals and vice-principals are invited to learn alongside their colleagues and subject matter experts.

- **July 5** – Unsettling Practice and Dislodging Oppression: Leading schools where students thrive with

Dr. Ann Lopez and Lawrence DeMaeyer

- **July 6** – Mindfulness Everyday with Heidi Bornstein
- **July 6 and 13** – Foundational Coaching Skills with Kate Sharpe
- **July 7** – De-escalation, Relationships and Healing with Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) and Nancy Rowe, educator, consultant and Traditional Practitioner of Anishinaabek lifeways, views and customary practices.
- **July 9** – Trauma-Informed Leadership with Dr. Jean Clinton as keynote speaker and a panel of experts
- **August 16** – Destreaming Panel Discussion
- **August 18** – [Supporting Distance Learning](#)
- **August 20** – Culturally Responsive School Leadership Through the Lens of Religious Literacy with Hiren Mistry and Lawrence DeMaeyer.

In addition, we have once again partnered with CPCO and VoicEd for a radio broadcast series.

- **August 16** – Meet the New Presidents
- **August 17** – Student Voices on Student Voice
- **August 18** – Student Focused Distance Learning: Shifting pedagogies
- **August 19** – Land Based Pedagogy: Bringing Indigenous perspectives to teaching and learning

Dr. Ann Lopez and Lawrence DeMaeyer

- **August 20** – Getting Ready: Setting good habits.

The final component of our summer learning consists of [four half-day sessions for newly appointed vice-principals or principals](#). These half days are part of a broader program that will continue in the fall and offer learning, networking and coaching based on participant needs. It is our hope that this program will complement existing board leadership development work.

Looking ahead to the fall, we are committed to our Professional Learning [Goals and Principles](#) for evidence-based learning sessions that support you in different aspects of your work, including anti-oppressive leadership, instructional leadership, school management and mental health and well-being.

We remain open to suggestions about our professional learning format and content. If you have any questions or suggestions, send them to us at [learning@principals.ca](mailto:learning@principals.ca). If you aren't receiving our weekly Professional Learning Bulletin, featuring upcoming learning opportunities, you can sign-up for it on the OPC [website](#). ▲

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









# Schooling for REC VERY

Reframing our thinking on  
emergency learning

By Protective Services Team  
Illustration by Aaron McConomy

As school leaders, we are well aware that functioning in a state of crisis since March 2020 has been extremely taxing. We wonder how schools will move forward when we seem to be perpetually stuck in emergency learning in response to the unpredictability of the pandemic. Is it time for a change in thinking to begin to refocus our actions as a move to recovery, whatever that might look like, for the sake of hope?

During the past year, many administrators have reported feeling overwhelmed with the scope of the role as challenges intensify with leading a school, staff and students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift between in-person and virtual online learning has required careful management, and principals and vice-principals have worked tirelessly to adapt on short notice. Those challenges have included leading staff, students and families through new modes of teaching; changing schedules; managing different learning environments with limited resources; budgets strained by pandemic-related costs; extensive reporting responsibilities; staffing shortages; and the isolation that comes with the loss of in-person social contact with peers, staff and students.

Additionally, principals, vice-principals and other school staff are consistently expected to interact with large classes without adequate resources to follow the basic public health guideline of social distancing, as identified as appropriate for every other sector of society. As a result, many of you have expressed feelings of great vulnerability to infection, especially in light of the new variants of concern.

Our Provincial Councillors and local District leaders have been sharing these issues in bi-weekly calls with our Protective Services Consultants and the Senior Staff team. The state of school administrators is repeatedly described as stressed, anxious, overwhelmed

and exhausted. The uncertainty of the pandemic continues to shift the educational focus of schools under emergency learning, increasing the workload and responsibilities for principals and vice-principals. The increased volume of calls for support through our PST Intake to our office reflects similar concerns and issues.

Through weekly contact with the ministry, and through public letters to the Minister of Education and the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the OPC has continued to strongly emphasize these significant issues, while advocating for the necessary resources, communication and working conditions to ensure the safety of our Members. A partnership was formed and meetings held with medical experts at Sick Kids Hospital to share our concerns. Despite this considerable advocacy, there has been little movement on the part of the ministry to consult further or to move on the issues as noted.

There is a great need for a mental, emotional and physical break from the pace and stress of the continued pandemic issues that all educators, students, families and community members have been facing. The summer break is within our sights.

While we are still in the midst of this crisis, making it difficult to look beyond immediate urgent needs, we have hope that improved conditions will result from the ongoing vaccination process. Educators will need to regroup and look to the 2021–2022 school year with an eye

to education reform. It is time to consider how education will transition to a recovery process from the current emergency response to the pandemic, keeping in mind the uncertainty of how the pandemic will progress.

By examining the learning from this current crisis, educators are reminded that, “we must keep our eyes on the prize – identify and safeguard the best of what school used to be and seize the opportunity to design an educational process that better serves the academic, social-emotional, safety and public health needs of our post-pandemic students” (Amy Klinger, June 2020). This includes a focus on equitable access to education, reimagined use of technology, specific professional learning and training for staff to assist students with potential learning gaps, building partnerships with parents and community partners and re-establishing effective communication with our school communities.

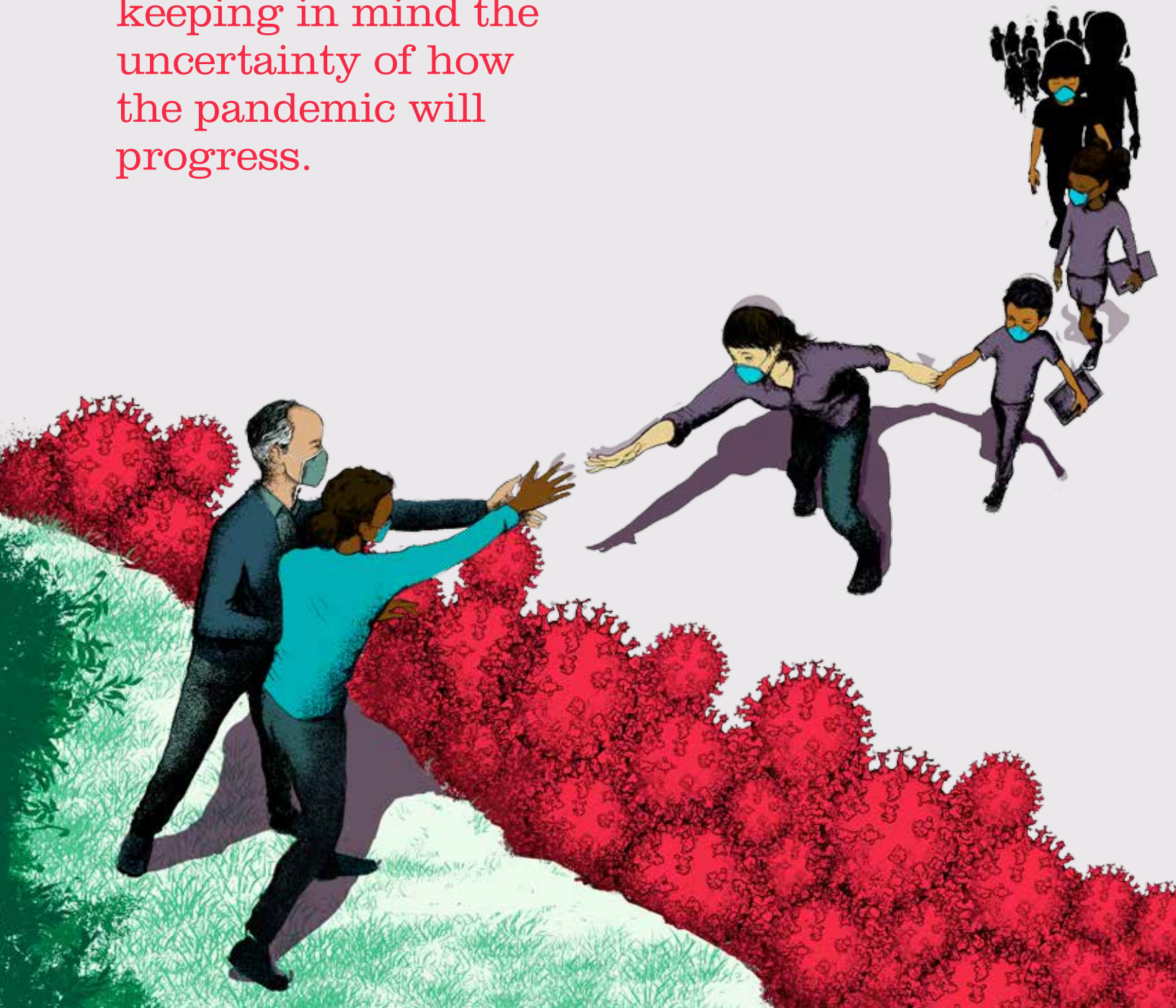
In a March 2021 webinar, Pasi Sahlberg, a Finnish educator, researcher and author, responded to a question about what should be done to help schools recover and return to in-person learning with the following observation, “We’re asking the wrong question ... instead of asking what we should be doing when we go back, we should be asking ‘what should we stop doing right now?’ When the pandemic has shaken our systems, we must first look at what to stop and then ask, ‘What should we do now?’”

For school leaders, this is solid advice. To understand the critical first steps in transitioning to a recovery mode in place of an emergency response, we must work in partnership with boards to examine what’s been learned, determine what should be stopped, and decide what should be further implemented and improved as we move forward.



It is time to consider  
how education  
will transition to a  
RECOVERY PROCESS

from the current  
emergency response  
to the pandemic,  
keeping in mind the  
uncertainty of how  
the pandemic will  
progress.



This may be reflected in the modes of learning that boards will provide to respond to student needs, given the experiences of technology used to deliver virtual instruction. As school leaders look to transition, they will be required to use significant skills to plan, prepare and be flexible to effectively combine social-emotional, academic and operational components of their schools.

For principals and vice-principals to begin the transition at the school level, there must be consideration of the following areas.

### Focus on Wellness Through Trauma-informed Leadership

To effectively lead in the recovery of one's

school community, it is critical that principals and vice-principals first consider their own mental and physical health and well-being. Many demands on school leaders have them juggling the needs of family, friends and all those with whom they interact at school, making it necessary for administrators to practice effective self-care. Access to trauma-informed leadership training is highly recommended.

Using a trauma-informed lens, strategies for suggested self-care for school leaders and staff could include

- setting and maintaining personal boundaries with regard to time, breaks and managing increased workload as much as possible

- being aware of your own personal degree of trauma and how the potential impact of working with staff and students who have experienced trauma might affect your own ability to manage the role
- getting social support from family, friends or colleagues and
- grounding yourself through self-reflection and engaging in mindfulness practices in ways that meet your personal needs (Dr. Will Henson, Dec. 2020).

As administrators begin to contemplate recovery and a possible transition to full return of the school population, it will be necessary to also consider the impact of stress and heightened anxiety on students and their families, and how they and their staff will address this dysregulation if learning is to resume effectively.

School leaders are encouraged to focus on building calm environments through the teaching and reinforcement of self-regulation. "Regulation is the way people manage their thinking, emotions, attention and physical reactions. Understanding regulation is critical to creating a trauma-informed learning environment. Only a well-regulated adult can help support and regulate others" (Dr. Will Henson, Dec. 2020). Understanding how self-regulation helps with trauma will enable all school staff to support both students and themselves in creating a compassionate, empathetic learning environment.

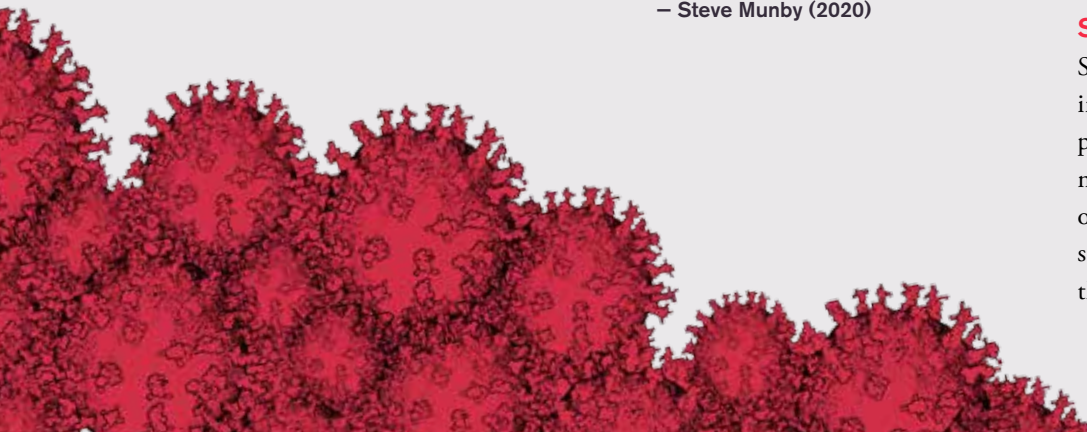
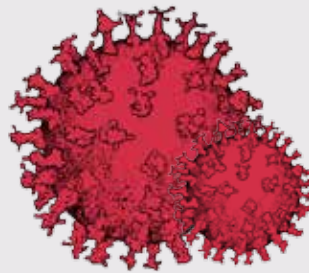
### Analyze the Current Context of Your School Community

School communities have endured quite a lot in the past year, so it is important for the principal and vice-principal to reassess what needs to be done to move forward. In May of 2020, respected educator Steve Munby stated, "this isn't just about the context of the past 6–12 months in which urgency and

“

What kind of leadership is needed from me now?  
What needs to change from the old ways pre-pandemic to what is needed in this new context?”

— Steve Munby (2020)





adrenalin played a huge role. School administrators need to ask themselves ‘What kind of leadership is needed from me now? What needs to change from the old ways pre-pandemic to what is needed in this new context?’

Moving forward, it will be important for school leaders, with the help of their board, to identify and analyze the new context of their school community, through conversations with students, staff, parents, members of the school community and partners in health care. Asking questions to determine student, family and staff needs, possible learning gaps and need for differentiation, issues of equity that have impacted health and access to education might form the basis of some of the discussions.

### **Work to Re-establish Relationships and Build New Partnerships**

Principals and vice-principals focusing on recovery will seek to reinforce and nurture relationships with staff, students and families, particularly those who may need additional support in dealing with changes they’ve experienced socially as a result of the pandemic.

Administrators will benefit from the assistance of professionals and community agencies with expertise in various areas of social-emotional needs and are encouraged to work with their boards to identify such supports within the community.

### **Relationships with administrative colleagues and friends**

Some school leaders may feel the need to collaborate, share and talk through their working processes, ideas and plans. The increased intensity and stress of the role is often made easier with the development of a supportive network of fellow administrators, mentors and friends, supported in an online capacity at this time.

### **Relationships with school staff and students**

Whether in-person or virtually, significant changes in learning environments have made the maintenance of relationships difficult. Social distancing, isolation and technology have taken their toll on mental health and well-being, and a necessary component of any recovery plan will be to rebuild learning and working relationships at school and in the community, particularly with students and families who were not easily reached or were unable to engage with virtual learning. Bringing all school staff back together will enable those who were either in in-person or virtual environments to re-connect, fostering a sense of belonging. The same opportunity should then be extended to students.

### **Partnerships and connections within the public health community**

Access to expertise is essential. This is needed now in ways that weren’t necessary before the pandemic, and include access to a range of specific expertise in mental health, counselling, bereavement, risk-assessment and public health and safety issues among others.

### **Anticipate the Eventual Return of Postponed Responsibilities**

The OPC continues to advocate on a provincial level with the ministry for careful consideration of any intensification of workload for principals and vice-principals in these unpredictable and overwhelming times. Until there is a significant reduction in the risks posed by the pandemic, we will continue to advocate for postponement of responsibilities such as the completion of Teacher Performance Appraisals, participation in Principal/Vice-Principal Performance Appraisals, develop-

ment of detailed school improvement plans, participation in full EQAO testing and so on. Any change in these directives will be made by school boards at the direction of the ministry and will be communicated through the boards.

In the wake of a school year that has been exhausting, mentally taxing and required administrators to be diligent in caring for not only their own personal mental health and well-being, but that of students, staff, family and community members, it is clear that leaders have discovered the flexibility, problem-solving skills, innovation and compassion needed.

We recognize that while school leaders have worked to apply their new learning, skills and capabilities required for emergency planning and decision-making, it has come with a significant toll. To our Members, remember that the OPC provides many supports and resources are available to you through our [Protective Services Team](#), [Professional Learning](#) and [Starling Minds](#).

Let us look to a recovery process that emphasizes attention towards mental health and well-being not only for our students, their families, staff and communities, but also for ourselves as we seek to move past mere survival into future success and continued growth. ▲

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### **RESOURCES**

Klinger, A. (2020). *Navigating School Leadership in a Post-Pandemic World*. ASCD Education Update. Vol. 62, Number 6.

Sahlberg, P. (2021). *Improving Schools: From Finland to Down Under*. (<https://app.knowledgehook.com/app/LeadershipSeries/Webinar/333b4430-f180-eb11-9751-0050568c42b6?c=ed-isfd&l=66b0aabc-08a6-4637-89d4-f36ce4b38ed5>)

Munby, S. (2020). *What Does a Pandemic Mean for School Leadership Development?* Ambition Institute. (<https://www.ambition.org.uk/coronavirus-response/what-does-pandemic-mean-school-leadership-development/>)

Henson, W. (2020). *4 Key Pillars of a Trauma-informed Approach During COVID-19*. eSchool News. (<https://www.eschoolnews.com/2020/12/17/4-key-pillars-of-a-trauma-informed-approach-during-covid-19/2/>)



# Mark Your Calendar

This summer we are pleased to offer the following learning sessions to support your ongoing professional development. Here are just a few examples:

Unsettling Practice & Dislodging Oppression: Leading Schools Where Students Thrive

July 5  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Everyday

July 6  
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Foundational Coaching Skills

July 6 and 13  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

De-escalation, Relationships and Healing

July 7  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Trauma-Informed Leadership

July 9  
9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

One-Day Conference

Supporting Distance Learning  
August 18  
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

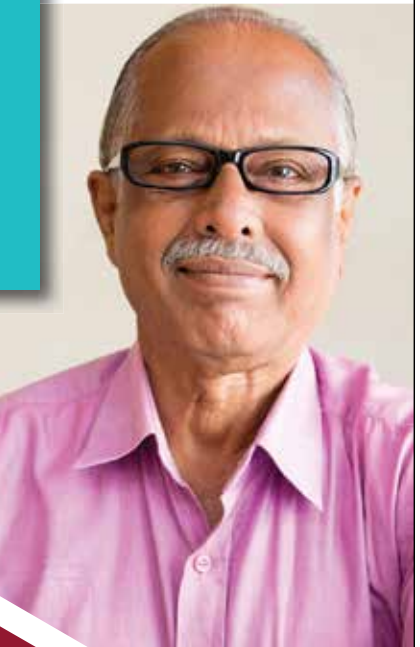
Radio Broadcast Series

Rise and Learn Principal Chats  
August 20, at 9:00 a.m.  
with host Stephen Hurley

Check out the [full list of all Additional Qualification Programs](#) that will also be offered throughout the summer season. Also see “Summer Opportunities” in the Professional Learning column on page 29 of this issue.



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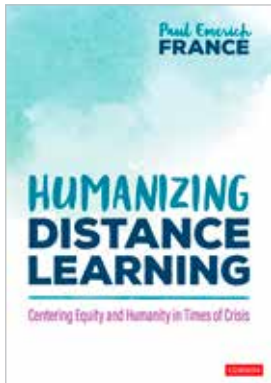
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# Humanizing Distance Learning: Centering equity and humanity in times of crisis

By Paul Emerich France  
Corwin – A SAGE Publishing Company  
ISBN 9781771663588

The phrase “unprecedented times” has defined the past year, as we have watched, read about and lived challenging

and unexpected experiences. We have been changed. Optimistically, we recognize some silver linings emerging from the disruptions of a global pandemic. The education system has certainly not been exempt from extreme and unforeseen challenges. We have shifted to remote or blended learning environments to ensure safety, and we continue to re-examine our practices to support students and staff learning from home.

Paul France’s book *Humanizing Distance Learning* (2021) came to me at a critical time as I was transitioning to our secondary virtual school. France centres his thoughts on a question posed by Bettina Love (“Abolitionist Teaching and the Future of Our Schools,” Haymarket webinar, July 23, 2020), “Why did it take a pandemic to see the humanity in teaching?” The introductory pages alone captured my immediate attention as he points out the “critical juncture” we have reached in our history – facing the global coronavirus pandemic, systemic racism, threats of authoritarianism and fascism and threats of climate change.

This book has been a helpful guide for me as a school leader to embrace an approach that supports flexible and reasonable expectations (for both students and staff), while also moving forward with the learning.

Whether supporting learning in a virtual/blended environment or in face-to-face classrooms, France calls on educators to build independence in learners. He encourages us to focus on learning through collaborative human connection and provide opportunities for students to unpack their identities and promote equity. His book provides in-the-moment learning and examples from his own experiences in the classroom and during remote learning.

The move last spring to remote learning in the majority of the province, and the creation of virtual schools and/or blended learning models this school year, have caused all of us to reflect on how we connect with and engage learners. France highlights the importance of socio-emotional learning, building a sense of community, resiliency and sustainable planning for educators, all while delivering complex instruction. Through a lens of equity, he encourages the reader to consider what it means to humanize learning.

While technology has obviously had a significant impact on our distance learning practices, France reminds us that distance learning is not about technology, but rather about human-

ization. He asks us to consider the purpose of technology and how we are using it to reimagine learning. In an OPC webinar on Digital Equity Strategies, France spoke about EdTech minimalism and becoming intentional in determining which digital strategies promote equity in any classroom.

A story from *Humanizing Distance Learning* that really resonated for me was a discussion France had with his students last spring regarding cultural appropriation and appropriate emoji use in the chat function of their virtual classroom. He shared how this critical dialogue served to strengthen classroom community; developed virtual classroom norms/agreements, representing for all students that identity matters; and deepened thinking and awareness. France shows repeatedly that powerful learning can and does occur in the distance learning environment!

*Humanizing Distance Learning* is a timely and thought-provoking read for educators. France reminds us all that despite what is occurring in the world, and what is yet to come, we must identify the opportunities presented and “teach and learn in pursuit of a deeper sense of collective humanity” (pg. 5). ▲

Teri Cook is a principal of secondary virtual school with the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board. [@TeriCook81](https://twitter.com/TeriCook81)  
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# The Introverted Principal

We can still be effective leaders

I have been told that I am “very difficult to get to know,” even by those with whom I work. This was a new realization to me. I have plenty of good friends, engage in activities like hiking and kayaking and love going out for lunch!

I enjoy people. My relationships hold deep meaning for me.

As a school administrator, I have received feedback from staff that I am a very calm person, that I bring about stability during stressful times like a misbehaving student or personal teacher challenges. I’ve come to the conclusion that my “introverted-ness” is misunderstood. Aren’t there other introverted leaders out there? Are we all similarly perceived? Are we all “difficult to get to know”? What is this lens of expectation that makes someone easier to get to know than others?

Several leadership articles attempt to provide statistics of the introverted versus extroverted personality in leadership positions. One resource I would recommend

is [Introverts, extroverts and everyone in between: How to connect in the workplace](#) (Randstad, April 10, 2019).

So what does the introverted school leader look like? We know the extroverts. They’re the ones who are comfortable contributing to meeting discussions, can be loud, funny and are often noticed. The introvert is often listening, contributing when members of the group are known to them, and doesn’t necessarily need to be noticed.

The book [Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking](#) Susan Cain (2012) brought affirmation to my leadership style. At times, my extroverted supervisor would lose patience with me, telling me I was too

slow, putting me off balance. But now, as a single administrator, I have become comfortable in my leadership style. After all, it’s as difficult for an introvert to become extroverted as it would be for an extrovert to become quiet and somewhat pensive.

To the extroverted supervisor, getting to know (or maybe trying to understand and appreciate) an introvert requires patience and openness. If there are only a small percentage of leaders who are introverted, there are fewer of us than our extroverted colleagues. While our voice may be quiet, our leadership is strong. We can complement the busy schedule and rushing pace of the school day. Is our calm and quiet confidence an asset? I say yes. ▲

Julie Gray is a proud leader as principal in the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.

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