The Register

The Other First Responders

Crisis supports for principals and vice-principals dealing with traumatic events

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Ontario **Principals'** Council

Cover Illustration by Jeannie Phan

Violence in Schools

A complex issue requiring many partners

The information on violence in schools that has been gathered by unions, the University of Western Ontario study, and recently by CBC News is extremely disturbing, but I would speculate that the results do not come as a surprise to principals and vice-principals. We have been lobbying the government for years concerning the increase in violence in schools and the need for additional support and in-depth research to be conducted to determine why this is happening.

School leaders take the issue of violence very seriously. No administrator wants their students or staff to feel unsafe in their school. But dealing with issues of violence is not a simplistic process, as is often portrayed in the media. Administrators must conduct a thorough investigation, speak with the students involved, interview others who may have witnessed the incident, involve parents, complete documentation and contact police, if necessary.

What makes the issue even more complex is that we cannot always share what we are doing due to privacy regulations. Although the media likes to portray this lack of a response as a result of principals not doing our jobs, it is the exact opposite. The principal is working to resolve the situation and protect the students involved in a legally and professionally responsible manner.

An additional complexity is that students do not always report when violent incidents occur. We can't investigate what we don't know. The CBC report mused that the reason for this lack of reporting is that students don't believe any action will be taken to deal with the issue. Again, a simplistic assumption to a complex issue.

The reality is that the answer to the issue of violence in schools is not to play the blame game. It is to acknowledge that this violence is not confined to schools, but rather is a systemic issue that is representative of society as a whole. As such, it is not simply the responsibility of administrators to address – it is a collective responsibility.

Principals are prepared to take some ownership and use our influence in our leadership role to address this issue, but we cannot do so alone. We are educators. We are not police officers, mental health experts, social workers or medical practitioners. Our area of expertise is education. We have a role to play but need other partners and stakeholders to join us in this fight.

One of our recommendations has been to ask for the establishment of

ILLUSTRATION: LUC MELANSON

a Think Tank, bringing experts to-gether to identify the reasons why this violence is occurring and to develop tools to assist schools and society in proactively, versus reactively, combat-ting this issue.

It takes a village to raise a child. It also takes a village to combat the violence that is placing our students in harm's way. We're ready to be part of that village. ▲

If you haven't already, read our Violent Incidents in Schools Position Paper, posted on our website.

Stay connected with the president on Twitter using @PresidentOPC

Nancy Brady

✉ president@principals.ca

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Happenings at the OPC …

Education Minister Stephen Lecce addresses our Provincial Council.

Performance by Splash Show Choir from Etobicoke School of the Arts (top) and Outstanding Contribution to Education recipients from The Ontario Student Trustees' Association with OPC President Nancy Brady (above).

Recipients of the 2019 OPC Difference Maker Award.

This fall and winter our subsidiary group International School Leadership held sessions with leaders from Australia, China, Iceland and the Netherlands.

T.F.W.

That Feeling When, you don't know the jargon

If there is one thing educators are sometimes known for, it's their beloved use of acronyms. We all use them. Everyone seems to know them, thinking everyone else knows what we mean. But do they? Stand in the middle of a professional learning meeting and it's common to hear huddles of educators discussing PLCs, APs, IEPs and throwing out various buzzwords. Acronym lingo has become like the secret society language for educators.

For educators, it's easy to get caught up in the use of jargon we have come to embed so commonly in our daily practices or communications. But not everyone we communicate with comfortably understands, or is familiar with, these appreciated terms. And if they don't ask us to explain or clarify what we're talking about, then they are missing out on the meaning and importance of conversations.

Perhaps your school has a few new teachers, or has been fortunate enough to welcome new immigrant families, where English is a second language. Using acronyms and jargon that others don't understand can be overwhelmingly intimidating, creating invisible barriers.

Without realizing it, overusing abbreviations can make others feel excluded or silly for not knowing or understanding their associated meanings. Our audience may feel too embarrassed to ask for clarification, or be confused by what we are trying to say.

Providing some clarification on common terms in your next outreach, staff meeting or conversation can help staff or parents navigate their needs and create a stronger sense of collaborative community, working better together to support the student.

A sample of commonly questioned acronyms are
- AP – Advanced Placement
- BIP – Board Improvement Plan
- CYW – Child Youth Worker
- DSB – District School Board
- EA – Education Assistant
- ECE – Early Childhood Education
- EQAO – Education Quality and Accountability Office
- FI – French Immersion
- IEP – Individual Education Plan
- IPRC – Identification, Placement and Review Committee
- JEPL – Job Embedded Professional Learning
- LD – Learning Disabilities
- OCAS – Ontario College Application Service
- OSR – Ontario Student Record
- OSSD – Ontario Secondary School Diploma
- OST – Ontario Student Transcript
- PLA – Prior Learning Assessment
- SIP – School Improvement Plan
- SEAB – Special Education Appeal Board
- SEAC – Special Education Advisory Committee

Common education phrases include

21st-Century Skills: Core identified skills believe to be required for the future, including collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving.

Flipped Classroom: Students learning new materials outside of the classroom, then using class time to build on that knowledge through discussions or problem-solving.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): A process whereby teachers, support staff, and parents work together to develop a plan to support the needs of students who may require a variety of supports.

Annual Education Plan (AEP): A form for students (grade 7 to 12) to record the results of the planning activities and reviews they conduct throughout the school year with the help of their teacher-advisers.

PLN/PLC: A Personal Learning Network or Professional Learning Community commonly refers to your work with colleagues or education connections made on social media or through organizations.

While we know they can't always be avoided, and we aren't suggesting that they be, be mindful to clarify or explain phrases or acronyms with meaningful descriptions about their applied intent. By doing so, you make it clear and easy for your audience to understand your meaning and intent, and allow them to focus on the core communication at hand. ▲

What is your most used education acronym(s)? Which ones should new educators familiarize themselves with? Tweet us using @OPCouncil #edutalk

✉ lromanese@principals.ca
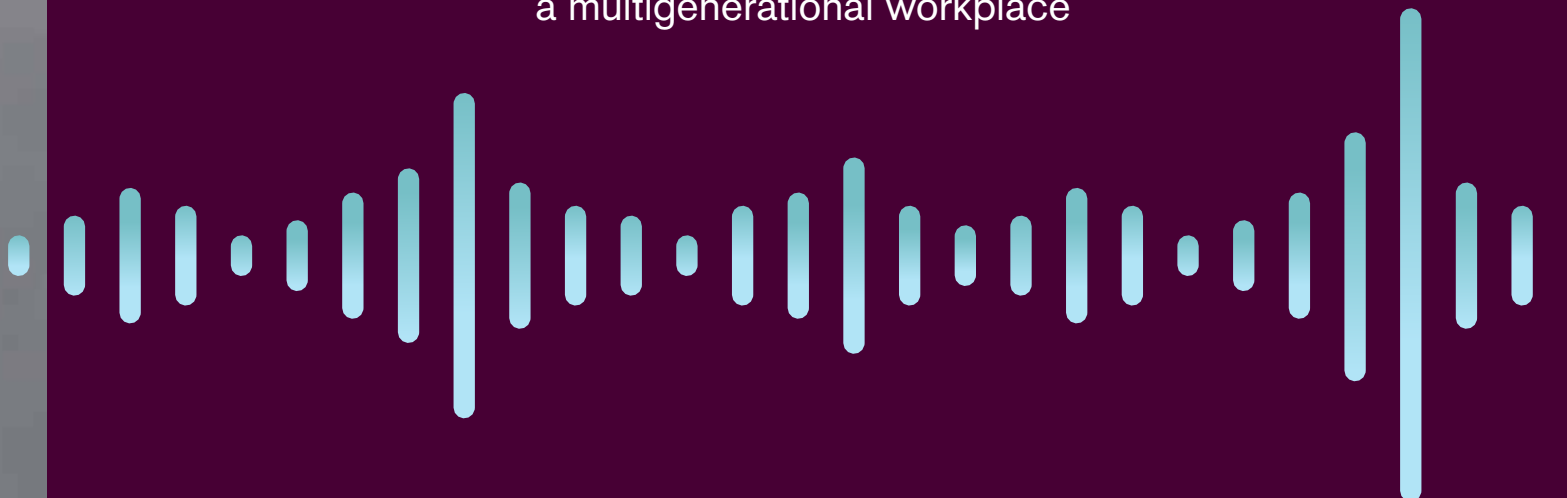
Voice Lessons

By Laura Romanese

Having hard conversations in a multigenerational workplace

From her office in sunny Palo Alto, California, international communications consultant and well-respected author, Jennifer Abrams, spoke with *The Register* about her work navigating the challenges of multigenerational conversations. Recognized as one of the "21 Women all K-12 Educators Need to Know," Abrams' expertise as a "voice coach" – helping others learn how to best use their voice, whether collaborating on a team, presenting to an audience or supervising and guiding employees – has made her an expert in guiding challenging conversations across the spectrum of ages.

R **You define yourself as a voice coach. Where did that title come from?**

A I say voice coach because if you are facilitating a group, there is a specific skill set to that work, and there is a set of skills to being an effective group member too, or in working as a coach. They all require that you use your voice effectively. In my work, I quickly realized that I had the credentials to teach English effectively, but I sure didn't have the credentials to talk effectively to other adults. It was just never part of my required qualifications list. After many years of research and dedication, I'm able to support leaders like principals and vice-principals by helping them find their voice in school leadership conversations. Specifically, I teach them about having challenging "deep end" conversations and being generationally savvy.

Outside of how to find our voice, do we need to work better at being effective team members?

Most educators do want to play in the school sandbox, and do so together, but are we ever taught how to be good communicators as leaders, or good group members with other adults? I know I was definitely taught how to teach my subjects for my grade level, but there is a whole other skill set around how to be an effective group member. Then add generational differences on a team, and discussions around equity, race and so on, and now there is more learning for leaders around how to have conversations that are humane and growth producing.

Why is it important for leaders to consider these differences when talking about challenging conversations with multiple generations?

It's definitely important. Would I say being aware of a person's generation is any more important than any other part of a person's identity? Not necessarily. But it is important to recognize that the adults who come in to work with us in our schools and with our kids do come with what we can identify as generational viewpoints. They have generational ways of looking at the idea of work, their expectations around what the employer should be doing to support them and their growth and even what collaboration should look like. Cognitive Coaching would call these frames "filters of perception," and leaders need to be aware of how these filters play out in what people value and how they communicate. Leaders need to remember to be mindful that while there is a school and a provincial mandate to do different things, your staff does have different perceptions based on their generational category. The work I do, specifically with new teachers, really brings to the forefront these generational differences.

What are the identified generations you currently identify in schools and their defining characteristics in terms of the ways they communicate?

Let's start with the Baby Boomers (Boomer). They were raised post-World War II when the view of the world was perhaps more optimistic. Together they thought they could make a difference for humanity. Characteristically everyone works together: teachers will stay late, some might bake all the cookies, some will organize the social events with a sense of pride for public duty. Typically, it is very much a "how do we make things happen as a team?" approach.

Generation X (Gen Xer) is the group that wants to be in the thick of it, but are characteristically known for wanting to be both efficient and pragmatic. Let's do the work but let's be efficient about our time. They may want access to technology, like using a Google Doc for all to see and work on together, but they also may have family and/or other important obligations. So, while they are happy to work together, they don't always see the need to do everything together in that team approach. Their approach is more: I will get it done on my own time.

Millennials are sometimes referred to as the "me" generation. This group characteristically feels they can be anything they want, and they have the technology and support of those around them readily accessible. Most are very used to having access to things in real time, and expect others to get things to each other pretty quickly – What's App, WeChat, FaceTime, Instagram – using these tools to communicate with speed. Educators assign them projects to be done in teams, give them clear expectations of what they need to do and set them up to get the work done with support and direction. This group is up for taking charge.

So, what do these differences mean? Well a Gen Xer might say, "That is great, but I need to go home – I will respond to you when the kids go to sleep." A Boomer might say, "Hey I thought we were working on this together this afternoon," while a Millennial might say, "I have lots of ideas.

I can text them to you tonight or upload them into our shared folder." These are all different styles of communication – in person, remotely, expecting 24/7 connections or not being comfortable using technology. I am not saying that there is a right or wrong in these perspectives. But schools, organizations and leaders need to be clear as to what is expected and adaptive in accommodating these differences when they can.

What are your top tips for navigating these generational differences in schools to build better practices for communicating?

First, don't start out having hard conversations. Instead, have more clarifying conversations, that is, 'clarity before accountability.' Most leaders feel that once hired, staff members are professionals and they assume that other professionals should just 'know better.' So we don't clarify our expected norms or needs, which without fail angers others. I like to call them "collaboration papercuts." Those annoying little nitty gritty details like the expectation to arrive on time to a meeting, and the details of what you have to bring. Of course, we think we shouldn't have to even mention these things to staff, yet these little things irritate the heck out of us when they don't happen. To avoid this, start out by have a clarifying conversation about specific expectations and how we work together.

Next, remember that generational groups, like our Boomers, need and often want a little more awareness around the use of the word "we." That means watch your language. Often, we begin conversations with adjectives and adverbs that can inflame a situation. In my own work, I have watched Gen Xer's say, "*I* can't do that," "*I* need this" or "that doesn't work for *me*." These statements can easily irritate others because it makes a Gen Xer appear selfish. Ultimately, it's about being mindful of the relationship with terms like "we," and being mindful in our conversations of the attitude that may otherwise be personally hurt by the "I" pushback.

Last, remember that Millennials can at times feel unvalued, so watch out for condescension. What this generation wants is to be mutually respected and not to be made to feel like they can't contribute anything of value to the conversation. If they are present, they are part of the team, so be sure you don't mistakenly belittle their ideas.

In terms of challenging conversations across generations, always try and start the conversation with a sense of respect. Acknowledge that both parties are colleagues now and will be beyond this interaction. Then watch your language – your use of I or we. Remember that how you end a conversation also matters. Display mutual respect, and reinforce that however difficult the discussion, we are here for student growth and success.

How do we gear professional learning opportunities to educators of different generations? Do they need to be different?

Yes and no. When I think about what educators do, where they do it and how they do it, it's mostly face-to-face. I know, people want Twitter chats and online resources, but there are certain professional

View the generational breakdown chart from CHAPTER 1 of Abrams' book

The Multigenerational Workplace: Communicate, Collaborate & Create Community.

learning opportunities that just don't lend themselves to those mediums. Who wants their surgeon to have received most of their professional learning from a Twitter chat? Not me! There are times it is more important that we create a sense of community and collaborate face-to-face meetings. Should you be mindful of generational differences? Yes. And you should offer those complimentary options that speak to those identified groups when it appropriately fits. But workshops like the one I conduct about having hard conversations is one that should be done face-to-face.

Would you say it is of value for schools to retain the mix of multi-generational workers?

I think it is important to *always* bring in different perspectives. All organizations need to have different points of view. I know certain schools that unknowingly segregate and isolate the more veteran staff, or aren't welcoming to new teachers. We need to be mindful to include all voices. This requires us to be both generationally savvy and what is defined as "allocentric" (other focused – opposite to egocentric). We try to make sure all students are heard in our classrooms and we need to do so for all adults as well.

You've quoted Harriet Lerner a few times in your work, who says, "Our conversations invent us. Through our speech and our silence, we become smaller or larger selves. Through our speech and our silence, we diminish or enhance the other person, and we narrow or expand the possibilities between us. How we use our voice determines the quality of our relationships, who we are in the world, and what the world can be and might become. Clearly, a lot is at stake here." What does Harriet's statement mean to you?

I do feel that conversation by conversation, a lot is at stake. Deciding the language we use can cause others to shut down and shut out, or to engage and feel welcomed. The challenge of generational work is about learning how to find our voices while respecting our differences, supporting what really matters in a way that expands and enhances communication in our schools. For principals and vice-principals, effective conversations can ultimately invent and transform the spaces for all staff. ▲

For more information on Jennifer's work, visit her website to view blog posts, podcasts and subscribe to her newsletter, *Voice Lessons*.
You can also check out her books *Having Hard Conversations*, *The Multigenerational Workplace: Communicate, Collaborate & Create Community* and *Hard Conversations Unpacked – the Whos, the Whens and the What Ifs* and most recently *Swimming in the Deep End: Four Foundational Skills for Leading Successful School Initiatives*.

✉ lromanese@principals.ca

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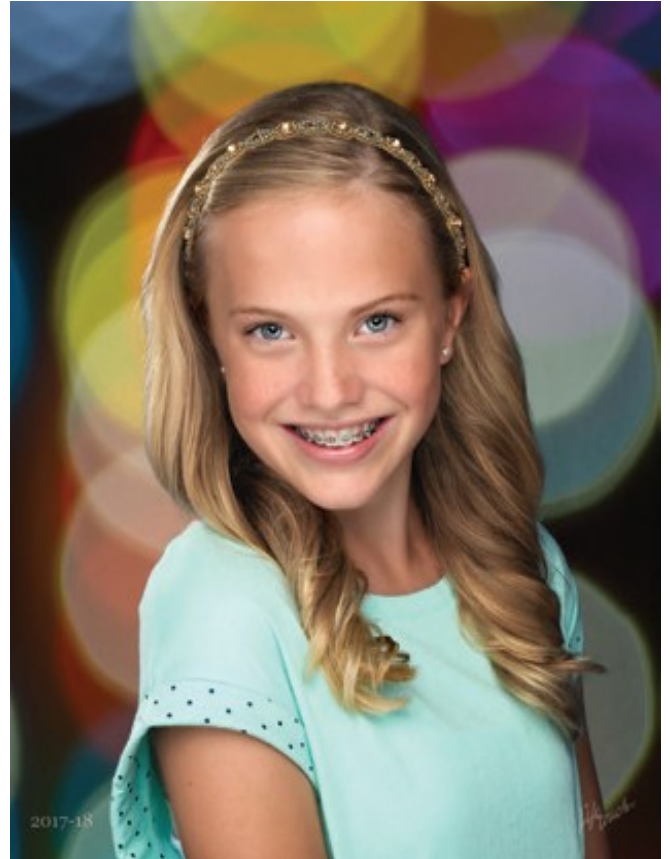
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The Other
First
Responders

Crisis supports for principals
and vice-principals dealing with
traumatic events

By Protective Services Team

Illustration by Jeannie Phan

Our schools seem to be under relentless siege.

Increases in the number and severity of violent incidents, more reports of bullying and an onslaught of traumatic events challenge school leaders' responsibility to keep schools safe. Principals and vice-principals often find themselves in the position of providing "first response" to significant crisis events that occur in their schools, communities or on a more global front, but that nonetheless spill into schools, impacting those within.

Administrators are required to ensure a safe, healthy, positive learning environment. When a traumatic event or a crisis occurs, it is expected that they will provide leadership, support and compassion to students, staff, school families and the community to get them through.

From the beginning to the end of traumatic situations, principals are expected to be strong, compassionate, clear-thinking decision-makers who protect students and staff, while trying to re-establish a normalized learning/working environment.

"A crisis or critical incident can be defined as an event outside of the range of normal human experience that would be markedly distressing to anyone: the death of colleagues or children or a near-fatal traumatic event, often witnessed by those involved" (Cole, Hayes, Jones, & Shah, 2013). While it might be considered uncommon for schools to be untouched by such events, crisis and trauma often occur in the form of deliberate acts of violence such as assaults, stabbings or the use of other weapons, and may also include events such as student suicide, the death of a student on a field trip, or trauma or death in the community.

Whether it be from daily incidents of conflict, dealing with students with violent behaviour, critical events such as student suicides, physical attacks and even deadly assaults, administrators are responsible for reacting in a quick, calm, decisive manner when responding to a crisis event.

84%

of principals and vice-principals were directly involved in an incident in their school in which a student acted in a violent way or threatened violence

In times of crisis, it is critical that immediate support be provided to students and staff, and that communication starts immediately to notify parents and community partners, such as police services or child protection agencies. Leadership has very defined protocols that must be followed to ensure that students, staff and the school are safe, and are able to recover from a tragic event.

Research continues to examine how school staffs are impacted by trauma. The effect of crisis events on staff is extremely stressful as it contradicts the school's ability to establish safe, secure learning environments that have predictable routines and promote student learning. Of significant concern is that this stress may also be exacerbated by having to return to the scene of the crisis every day, and to have to carry on as if all were normal in an effort to re-establish feelings of safety in students and staff.

School boards are instrumental in providing support to principals and vice-principals in the aftermath of a crisis event, and most have well-defined crisis management policies and safe-school practices in place to provide direction to school leaders, teachers and other staff.

What is lacking in board policies, procedures and safety plans is the inclusion of **extended crisis supports** that also address the mental health and well-being of principals and vice-principals who are charged with leading their schools through a crisis, regardless of personal trauma.

Increasing incidents of violence and of physical, emotional and cyber-bullying, as well as "blame and shame" rsponses from the public/media that often appear after these incidents, have contributed to the creation of a climate of anxiety, stress and fear for administrators who scarcely have time to recover from one incident before another conflict occurs. Many leaders then suffer from the effects of dealing on a sustained basis with heightened events, and their own mental health and well-being are overlooked as they care for those whom they supervise.

We intend to work with our Members and their boards to include valuable crisis supports for administrators in board policies and procedures.

It is imperative that school administrators receive the tools necessary to help manage their own stress before, during, and after a crisis event. "Everyone who experiences a disaster is touched by it, including crisis response workers and managers. Good planning can limit health and psychological consequences, minimize disruptions to daily life, and contribute to the growth and empowerment of the individual experiencing the disaster" (*A Guide to Managing Stress in Crisis Response Professions*. US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Centre for Mental Health Services, 2005, p. 7).

Recently, we have addressed some of these issues and concerns in two papers shared with Members: *Violent Incidents in Schools*, *Crisis/Trauma Support for Principals and Vice-Principals: Exemplary Practices*, and the Winter 2018 PST article in *The Register Traumatic Events* by John Bowyer and Ken McNaughton.

Dealing with Violent Incidents in Schools

Over the past several years, an increase in the number and severity of violent incidents in and around schools involving students has been reported by educators and in the media. With a combination of violent behaviour from students with identified special education needs and violent assaults by students struggling with issues of mental health, it is quite evident that classrooms and teaching face greater safety risks.

Results of a 2018 survey of members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) noted that

- 79% of ETFO members said the number of violent incidents has increased
- 75% said the severity of violent incidents has increased
- 70% have personally experienced violence and witnessed violence against another staff member.

In response to concerns raised by parents and the ETFO data, we conducted a survey of our Members to collect data on the increase of violent incidents from the perspective of the school leader. The response from almost 25% of principals and vice-principals from across Ontario looked at data from the 2017/18 school year, and found

Results of a 2018 survey of members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)

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70%

have personally experienced violence and witnessed violence against another staff member.

- 84% of principals and vice-principals were directly involved in an incident in their school in which a student acted in a violent way or threatened violence
- 87% of principals and vice-principals intervened directly in an incident in which a student acted in a violent way or threatened violence at the request of another staff member
- 40% of principals and vice-principals were involved in such incidents more than 10 times that year
- 45% of principals and vice-principals were hurt during such incidents.

The data from the two surveys demonstrates an increase in the number and severity of incidents, and underscores the degree to which principals, vice-principals and teachers have been involved, intervened and injured by students during these incidents. Support staff, particularly educational assistants who often work with students who struggle with aggressive behaviours, are impacted both physically and emotionally when they are hurt.

Safe working conditions must be available for all staff, including principals and vice-principals, who are not only administrators but are also "workers" entitled to protection under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The government is required to ensure safety is provided. We have made several recommendations on how to proceed, both at provincial and local district levels. We will continue to insist on exemplary practices in crisis/trauma support for administrators. School boards must also understand the need for this support in maintaining the mental health and well-being of their staff.

In the fall of 2019, three administrators from a secondary school in the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board found themselves managing a significant crisis event, with the stabbing death of one of their students on school property. Among the first

to arrive on the scene, these administrators not only viewed the devastating injuries suffered by the student and responded to the tragic assault, but were required/expected to follow protocols, and manage both students and adults on the scene in a calm and assertive manner.

Police arrived quickly, as did paramedic assistance, and a flurry of events took place within a two-hour time frame. Throughout it all, the administrators remained composed, attending to all who needed assistance, providing support to police services and communicating immediately with the board's Senior Staff.

Despite not having specifics defined in their policy for crisis management supports for administrators, the board was quick to offer supports for their school leaders, with three supply administrators and 15 supply teachers deployed to the school. The board's Director, Superintendent of Schools, Communications Director and Wellness Manager moved on site for short-term wrap-around support, as the administrators prepared to lead their students, staff and school families through the crisis.

Arrangements were made for access to counselling for students, staff and, specifically, the administrators. With our Protective Services on site to support the principal and vice-principals, as well as to support board efforts to assist these administrators as they dealt with the crisis, the school was able to respond to the crisis while allowing the administrators to acknowledge their personal stress.

Currently, most board policies regarding Crisis Management fail to recognize the devastating impact that school tragedies have on administrative teams. The provincial working group struck to consider best practices in crisis management found that, while there were some existing good practices in some boards, these were informal and highly variable de-

pending on the composition (and experience) of the senior leadership team. At the time, there was not a single policy in the province that provided guidance for school board personnel to ensure that their principals and vice-principals were supported through a crisis at their school. Policies focused on how other staff, students and school communities ought to be supported, including by the school's administrative team, but there were no policies that contemplated support for principals and vice-principals, despite the emotional upset and additional stress and pressures placed upon them during a crisis.

One board with exemplary practice in the area of inclusion of crisis supports for administrators is the Durham District School Board. It has included the following in the resource provided to both principals/vice-principals and other staff:

"An important consideration when dealing with a traumatic event is identifying and implementing supports for students, staff and the 'caregivers,' including administration. Administrators are expected to manage the traumatic event as well as taking care of others during and after the event; both in the short-term and long-term. Often there are little to no supports in place for the administrator to help them deal with the emotional and psychological toll of the event. As compassionate caregivers, administrators, support staff and school staff need to be aware of the impact on their own well-being ('vicarious trauma') when dealing with a traumatic event."

"Support of administrators needs to occur as they progress through the stages of recovery; both in the short-term and the long-term. While dealing with an emergency, administrators run on 'instinct.' Once the situation stabilizes, emotions return, including any feelings of distress associated with the event. Administrators need the time necessary to talk through the traumatic event with

45%

of principals and vice-principals were hurt during such incidents.

a professional. In addition, connecting with and talking to a 'trusted' colleague helps the administrator continue the process of addressing his or her negative emotions. Having a colleague check to ensure that the administrator is looking after himself or herself is an effective well-being strategy. Taking action allows the administrator to restore a sense of control and counteracts the feeling of powerlessness. Interacting and working with others in a positive way allows administrators to regain control

and begin to heal"(Recovering from Trauma, *Psychology Today*, Ellen McGrath, 2016).

We continue to advocate on behalf of our Members, for the following exemplary practices to be embedded into existing school board policies on Crisis Management, or addressed in a separate, stand-alone policy that addresses specifically how principals and vice-principals should be supported in a school crisis. Included in our recommendations for specific supports are detailed checklists that look at

- managing workload during the crisis
- support from senior staff and access to mental health services for principals and vice-principals
- administrative teams that have the flexibility to support school staff
- board should debrief events to consider whether the policy is working to support administrative teams.

We are also committed to supporting our Members in prioritizing their mental health and well-being by providing resources such as the Starling Minds program. This online resource is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, an evidence-based practice that can help you overcome and manage anxiety, depression and stress. It is a valuable addition to your mental health kit. You can participate in your own space, at your own pace.

We continue to work to develop and implement consistent, exemplary practices that will ensure our principals and vice-principals remain healthy and feeling strong enough to cope with the challenges of leading schools. Our fervent wish is that our students are able to learn in secure, positive learning environments, free of violence and trauma. ▲

✉ asayed@principals.on.ca

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Customized Professional Learning

Content and learning modes continue to evolve

By Nadine Trépainer-Bisson

Over the past few months, as the new Director of Professional Learning with the OPC, I have worked with staff and Members to gain an understanding of the needs of principals, vice-principals and school boards. What I learned is that the needs are diverse, both in terms of content and preferred modes of learning. We consulted with our Members through surveys, a Council storefront and focus groups. Our goal is to provide varied professional learning opportunities that are relevant and evidence-based.

Recently, we embarked on a board-by-board process to offer and develop customized workshops that are responsive to needs. As a result of that outreach and information we gathered, an 18-month plan for professional learning has been developed for our Members that includes Additional Qualification (AQ) programs, summer learning and a new webinar series.

We will continue to add to this plan as we try to be innovative in our professional learning offerings while maintaining a level of service you have come to expect of us. All the information pertaining to professional learning opportunities is available on our website under Professional Learning.

In addition, we are working with our education partners on professional opportunities in Ontario and across Canada. In Ontario, we are partnering with l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO) and the Catholic Principals' Council | Ontario (CPCO) to continue work on cyberbullying through the provincial launch of some reactive and proactive placemats. We are also working on resources in support of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families.

Our first OPC book club was launched. We are hopeful that supervisory officers will also take part in this initiative.

Nationally, we are looking forward to launching our French as a Second Lan-guage leadership modules with a combined British Columbia/Ontario cohort. It is our hope that broadening the scope of these modules will enrich the discussions between principals and vice-principals in both provinces.

As OPC's Director of Professional Learning, my goal, and that of the Professional Learning team at the OPC, is to update our programs, courses and other offerings to best meet your needs. Your feedback is welcome to ensure success in this endeavour. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us (learning@principals.ca) to share any comments or suggestions. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at some of our upcoming professional learning opportunities this year. ▲

Nadine Trépainer-Bisson

✉ learning@principals.ca

How do I ensure that all students are learning, and plan with the goal to close achievement gaps? How do we analyze our data to identify these gaps? Who are our most marginalized students? What are the ways in which I can support the adult learning in the building to address gaps in achievement and marginalization? Where do I begin?

These are questions school leaders grapple with on a daily basis while juggling the competing demands of the role. Leaders are responsible for creating the conditions for learning, setting expectations and securing accountability, to positively impact and improve student achievement and well-being. This also includes challenging the status quo and rectifying inequitable outcomes.

How today's inclusive conversations shape tomorrow's actions

By jeewan chanicka and Dr. Camille Logan

Illustration by Mike Ellis

Shining light on the shadows

For over four decades, we have continued to see the over-representation of the same groups of students in achievement and well-being gaps based on their social identities. Despite many years of initiatives focused on equitable and inclusive schooling, groups of students who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQ, living in poverty and/or have identified learning needs continue to be impacted by the same structural patterns of exclusion, disengagement and underachievement.

Within the context of Truth and Reconciliation, we must keep in mind the distinct work required to support Indigenous self-determination and governance. The Inclusive Design approach can open explicit avenues for conversation and consultation with elders, knowledge keepers and Nations for their own thinking, guidance and input on what they feel is necessary to support the success of Indigenous students. This is even more critical when we keep in mind the role of education in causing harm to Indigenous peoples.

Given that all students can learn, and are capable of reaching their full potential, it is incumbent upon educators to challenge these persistent inequitable outcomes. Here, the work of the principal is critical to changing these patterns, and the approach of Inclusive Design is an effective process to assist us in doing so.

What is Inclusive Design?

Adapted from the field of human rights, with a focus on accessible design for all, Inclusive Design is an assets-based process for school improvement that can be monitored and measured to address inequitable outcomes.

This approach helps principals work smart by bringing the many facets of their work together into one design process, anchored in anti-oppression, critical pedagogy and human rights. Much of the excellent work already happening in Ontario is part of the six threads of Inclusive Design, providing a roadmap to support principals and educators.

This approach puts identity at the centre of conversations about student learning and outcomes by asking us to consider exactly "who" our children are, "their" lived experiences, identities, abilities, needs and stories. In this process, we identify those who are most marginalized and underperforming in terms of their schooling and plan school improvement with these students in mind.

Who Are Our Students?

True school improvement occurs when students are centred, communities are engaged, the environment is reflective of students and families, instruction is rich and the leadership is sustained and transformational.

Inclusive Design is not simply a program to be "implemented" or an "initiative" with simplistic criteria checked-off upon completion. It is a way of "thinking and doing" that leads to a change in the school improvement planning processes. It challenges existing mindsets and practices in terms of teaching, learning and leading that have failed to serve the needs of all students. Inclusive Design pushes beyond the concept of universal design, well-known in the world of Special Education, with its singular identity focus around ability. Since no individual is a "singular-identity being," Inclusive Design is responsive to all social identities and their intersections. Focusing on ability without considering the impact of other identities – class, language, gender, race and so on – is harmful to the students we serve.

The six threads of Inclusive Design are
- designing instruction
- engaging parents, families, elders and communities
- establishing environment as third teacher
- analyzing data
- building leadership and capacity
- engaging and responding to student voice and agency.

These are not new ideas, but combined with asking critical questions, they are carefully designed to support principals and educators to centre the most marginalized students. For instance, what does our data tell us about who is marginalized? What systems and structures are in place that need to be changed? What learning do we (the adults), need to do to change these outcomes?

Although each thread appears self-explanatory, central to Inclusive Design's success is that educators reflect on each one with a critical stance to question the status-quo and traditional approaches to school improvement. If we continue to do what we've always done, we will continue to get the same results.

Let's take a look at each of the six identified threads in more detail.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION:

How does learning in classrooms reflect the identities, abilities and experiences of the students we currently serve?

This thread challenges educators to think critically about who is at the centre of their programming, consider the knowledge centred in that learning and ensure that the teaching reflects the identities, lived experiences and abilities of all learners. To do this, an Inclusive Design approach to instruction is **culturally responsive and relevant, inquiry-based** with

a social justice focus that is developmentally appropriate for all students. It is important that this approach be used in all subject areas. Principals then work to ensure that the right structures are in place, appropriate resources are allocated and questions are being asked to support their staff to get there.

ENGAGING PARENTS, FAMILIES, ELDERS AND COMMUNITIES:

How do our classrooms and schools honour the voices and lived realities of parents, families and community members in local and global contexts?

Principals must seek to build meaningful relationships with members of the school community by actively pursuing the perspectives of all families, particularly seeking out those who may be traditionally marginalized by the education system. Entry points must be provided so everyone can become fully engaged in the process of schooling, recognizing that communities bring rich assets, gifts and expertise into school communities. By leveraging multiple relationships, students are supported to achieve their full potential. Inclusive design focuses on the school as a hub of community development and uses community voices to help guide the work of overall school improvement.

ESTABLISHING ENVIRONMENT AS THIRD TEACHER:

What does the environment of our schools say about how we value our learners, communities and the process of learning?

From the moment students step onto the grounds of a school, everything they see and hear make up the experiences that teach them something about their value, worthiness and

Within the context of Truth and Reconciliation, we must keep in mind the distinct work required to support Indigenous self-determination and governance. The Inclusive Design approach can open explicit avenues for conversation and consultation with elders, knowledge keepers and Nations for their own thinking, guidance and input on what they feel is necessary to support the success of Indigenous students. This is even more critical when we keep in mind the role of education in causing harm to Indigenous peoples.

abilities. Students need to see themselves reflected in their curriculum and their physical surroundings. What we value is reflected in what students, staff and families see, hear and do on a daily basis. Principals must work with all educators to ensure that the diverse voices, gifts, stories, ways of knowing, cultures and narratives of students, families and communities are an integral part of all learning spaces.

ANALYZING DATA:
How well do we know our students and how they are experiencing their learning environment?

School leaders must think critically about the analysis, interpretation and interrogation of data to ensure barriers are identified and school data cannot be used in ways that serve to further marginalize historically marginalized students and communities. Using multiple sources of data helps us to understand the diverse realities of our students and communities to identify patterns of success and underachievement. Principals need to name and question why certain populations of students are underserved. Answers to these questions (and more) help to define the adult learning needs required to successfully support marginalized learners and is central to school improvement planning. It is critical not to shy away from these tough conversations but rather "lean in" to the discomfort, supporting staff to move through the discomfort alongside you, together moving forward towards solution

BUILDING LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY:
Who are the professionals in the building (identities, abilities and lived experiences) in relation to the students we serve?

Critical to school improvement is the school leader's role in building the leadership capacity of staff. Through Inclusive Design, school leaders can ask themselves how they are plan-

ning to build the collective capacity and leadership of their students, staff and community. Principals challenge patterns of achievement aligned with social identities, identifying and removing all forms of discrimination so that inclusive leadership can close achievement gaps. They must set high expectations in this area for themselves and their students. The key to this thread is the recognition that equity is a leadership competency, and a critical way of thinking about, and constructing leadership for transformation and change by thinking creatively about, how we can make a difference in the lives of all students.

**ENGAGING AND RESPONDING
TO STUDENT VOICE AND AGENCY:**

Who are our students?', 'How are they reflected?' and 'How are we preparing them for the world they will live in, shape and lead?'

Students are at the heart of all that we do. True student achievement is conditional upon well-being, which means that achievement is not simply a score on a test or a grade on a report card. It is our professional duty to create the conditions necessary to activate student agency so students find and use the power of their own voices to engage their peers and teachers in reciprocal learning experiences. The voices, identities, abilities and lived experiences of our students must shape and guide school improvement processes to ensure equitable outcomes that ultimately close gaps. More importantly, principals must ask, "how are my students' voices driving school improvement?"

The success of the Inclusive Design model occurs when all six threads are woven together, supported by critical analysis and questions about school data, becoming foundational to creating goals that centre the most marginalized students. This alone provides a focus for leadership, resulting in a culture of improvement. Here, staff actively begin to understand that their work is to identify and close achievement and well-being gaps, particularly for

student populations traditionally "trapped" in them, ultimately allowing for the success of all students.

In *Navigating Cultural Borders in Diverse Contexts: Building Capacity Through Culturally Responsive Leadership and Critical Praxis* (2015), Lopez states, "... schools assist in the replication of dominant culture values. It is important that [leaders] become aware of changes that are taking place in the world … to become involved in shaping the conversation of tomorrow especially as schools experience ever-increasing diversity. Built upon best and promising practices, Inclusive Design allows multiple entry points for educators, regardless of where they are on the continuum of learning in addressing systemic issues necessary for educational transformation and improved outcomes. Significant to this process is that equity is integrated, rather than a "stand alone initiative," siloed from the day-to-day work of school leadership. ▲

Dr. Camille Logan (Superintendent of Education, Student Achievement, School Operations in the YRDSB) is well-known for expertise in the areas of leadership, inclusivity, curriculum and instruction and has been honoured with various school leadership awards. Often recognized for her work across the province, she is sought out to speak and make contributions to guidelines, policy and practice at district and provincial levels. @camillelogan

✉ camillelogan96@gmail.com

jeewan chanicka (formerly the Superintendent of Equity, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression & Learning Network 28 for TDSB) is pursuing opportunities in the International Education sector. Most recently, he was chosen as a TED Ed Innovative Educator, recording a TED Ed talk in Scotland about challenging the ways that education systems continue to fail particular groups of students. @jeewanc

✉ jeewanc@gmail.com

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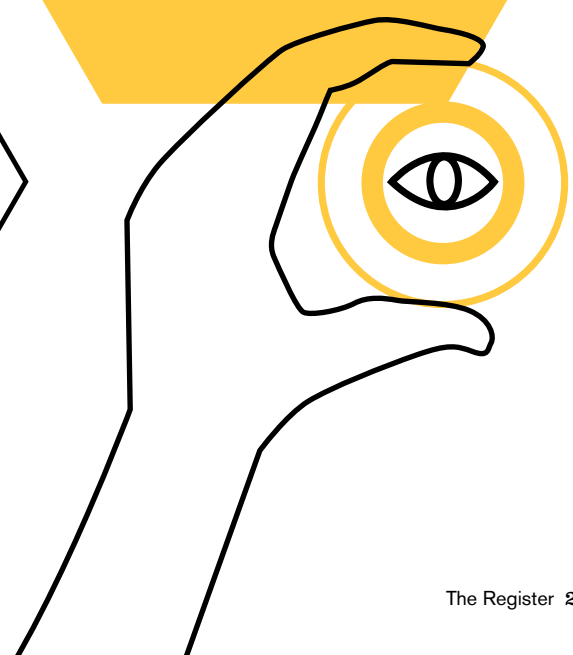
MAGIC

MAKING

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STA

When choice drives desire in professional learning

By Dr. Sunaina Sharma and Rebecca Newcombe

AFF

MEETINGS

Our Experience with Staff Meetings

We see you at the staff meeting secretly marking. We hear you saying, "this all could have been said in an email." We feel your exhaustion from a day of supporting students and knowing that you still have an evening of assessing their work and contacting parents. We hear you, and in sensing all of this, we were inspired to take a new approach to our school staff meetings.

The Research

When we started down this road, we wanted to invite change and innovation to the way our staff meetings were conducted. But before deciding on how to do that, we decided to look at the existing research in this area. There is a lot out there, and it can be overwhelming, but some of the ideas particularly resonated with us.

- "Coaching increases the likelihood that the behaviour will be sustained as a regular practice by 90 per cent or more of the participants" (*Coherence*. Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 61).
- "Choice gives students the opportunity to cast their own line and choose the bait they want to put on the hook. Learning follows, not because it is forced upon them, but because it is naturally connected to curiosity and inquiry" (*Re-Inventing School With Choice*. Juliani, 2015).
- "Professional development [shouldn't] take place in 'ballroom settings'." It shouldn't be "organized as top-down or vertical capacity building," but should instead be "job embedded" (*Intentional Interruption*. Katz & Dack, 2013, p. 26).
- "If you want engagement, self-directed is better" (*The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Pink, 2010).
- "Choice drives student ownership of their learning. This kicks empowerment into high gear, and ultimately leads to learning that is intrinsic, powerful, and deep" (*Empower*. Spencer & Juliani, 2017, p. 39).

What We Tried

Our goal was to make staff meetings relevant and meaningful. Acknowledging our experience in staff meetings and understanding the research, we then met as a Leadership Team to collaboratively brainstorm ideas that could transform how we conducted those meetings at our school. Our principal, Claire Proteau, listened to our team's initial ideas and consolidated them into a model that would allow our staff meetings to become an opportunity to explore topics of personal interest.

Next, we brainstormed with the staff to explore a range of topics that they felt passionate about diving into more deeply, such as
- going gradeless
- the thinking classroom
- integrating technology effectively into the classroom
- collaborative problem solving (CPS)
- teaching critical thinking
- supporting mental health in the classroom.

Lead teachers were tasked with facilitating each learning group – teachers leading teachers. Groups met during staff meeting time, providing the opportunity to collaborate, brainstorm, wonder, question and plan. On several occasions, teachers asked for more time to continue their journey. As a result of this request, additional time has now been carved out during professional development days.

Through our teachers leading teachers model, we noticed some wonderful things. They emerge as leaders and mentors to their peers. Within groups, there are some who are more knowledgeable about a particular topic and are better able to inform the group and support their colleagues in that particular area of professional development.

Teachers are collaborating. Within groups, they are talking, engaging, connecting and contributing more than in our previous staff meetings or formal PD days because they all have a common interest. They are co-planning staff meeting content, planning how to implement their new learning into the classroom and depending on the support of each other. This results in cross-curricular integration – leaning on each other. Between staff meetings, teachers email each other for feedback, observe each other trying out innovative ideas and continue the conversation at the lunch table.

What They Said

Our initial idea was to have teachers choose a topic for a semester and then change to a different topic of professional interest for the next semester. In January, after each teacher had taken part in the learning cycle, we asked for feedback. They provided positive responses and asked for time to explore more. Some of the comments included
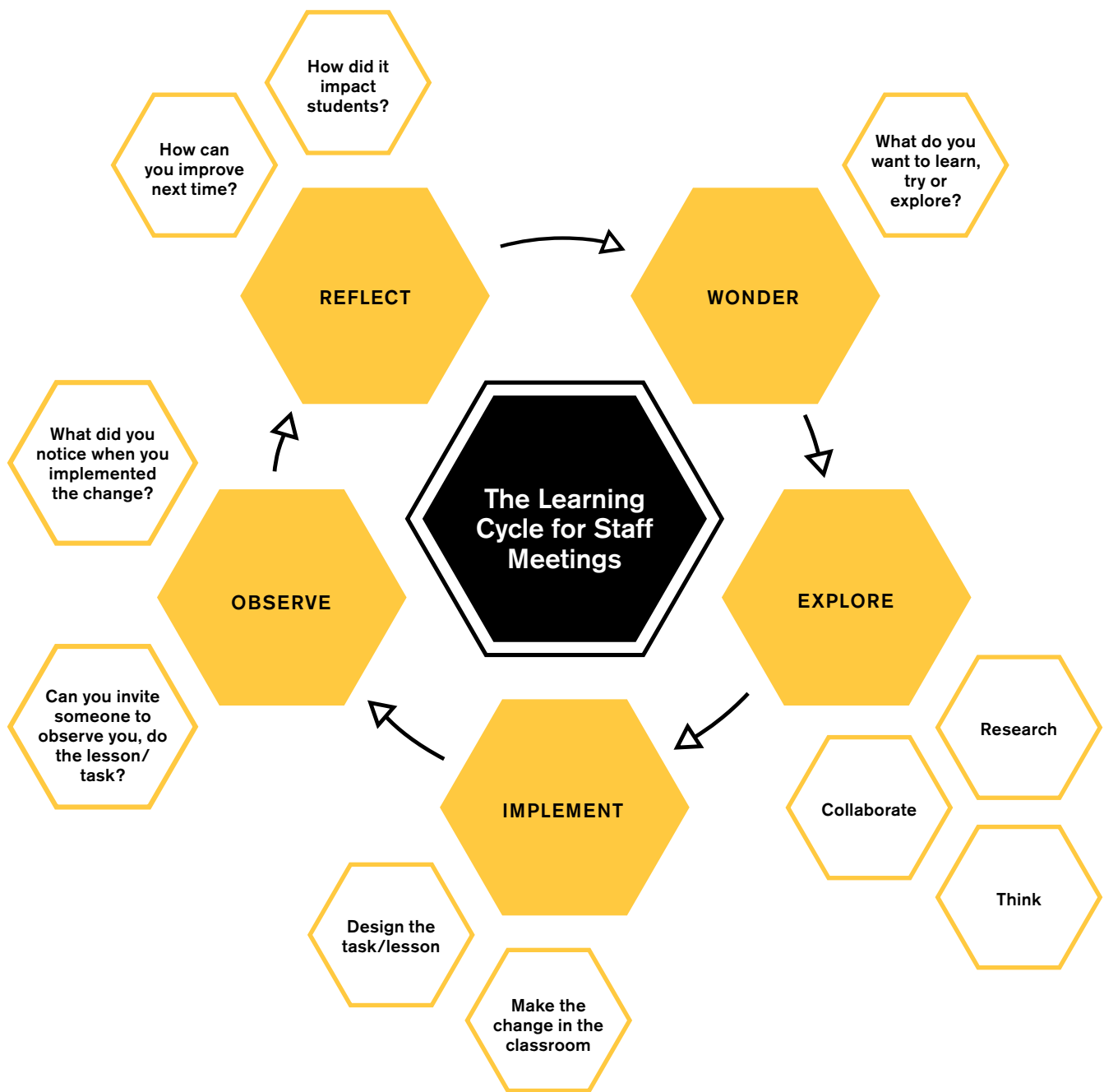- "We all learned together but each person applied learning differently in their classroom."
- "We appreciated the sustained time to explore and learn together."
- "We want more time. Can we have collaborative mornings? Can we expand this to a full-year project?"
- "We enjoyed having the freedom to put our engery into what we wanted to do."

Based on this valuable feedback, the decision was made to give teachers the option to continue exploring the same topic of professional interest for the next semester, or to move to a different topic and learning group. This allowed them to control and personalize their learning exploration. The decision to go a mile wide or an inch deep was each teacher's individual choice.

Seven Key Components to Remember

From our experience, we have identified seven key components that lead to a successful staff meeting model
1. **Purposeful:** Students need to be at the forefront. The purpose of the group needs to support student engagement, learning, achievement and/or relationships.
2. **Collaborative:** People need to work as a team. Someone cannot pursue their own individual topic, as it detracts from the ability to see a different perspective.

The Learning Cycle for Staff Meetings

- **WONDER** — What do you want to learn, try or explore?
- **EXPLORE** — Research, Collaborate, Think
- **IMPLEMENT** — Design the task/lesson, Make the change in the classroom
- **OBSERVE** — Can you invite someone to observe you, do the lesson/task?
- **REFLECT** — How did it impact students? How can you improve next time? What did you notice when you implemented the change?

3. **Personalized:** There needs to be a variety of groups for educators to choose from, so that they can explore something that is of professional interest. The topics need to be staff generated so that everyone can see themselves in the learning.

4. **Goal-oriented:** There needs to be a specific goal that the group wants to attain by the end of a specific time period. If the goal is too broad and/or lengthy, it's impossible to reach, consequently making the process frustrating. Internal accountability is built into each group.

5. **Inquiry-based:** Rather than the administrator or lead teacher deciding on the goal and direction for the group, the group itself needs to collaborate to identify what its learning journey will be. Members of the group need to explore their own answers.

6. **Safe Environment:** Educators need to feel comfortable enough to share their successes and failures with each other, without fear of judgement. Each challenge is seen as an opportunity to explore answers to the question, "What can we do next?"

7. **Learner-centred:** Each individual in the group needs to be responsible for the learning and journey so they can move at their own pace. Everyone learns differently, and each educator needs to feel free to learn as they need or want to.

PURPOSEFUL

INQUIRY-BASED

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

PERSONALIZED

COLLABORATIVE

GOAL-ORIENTED
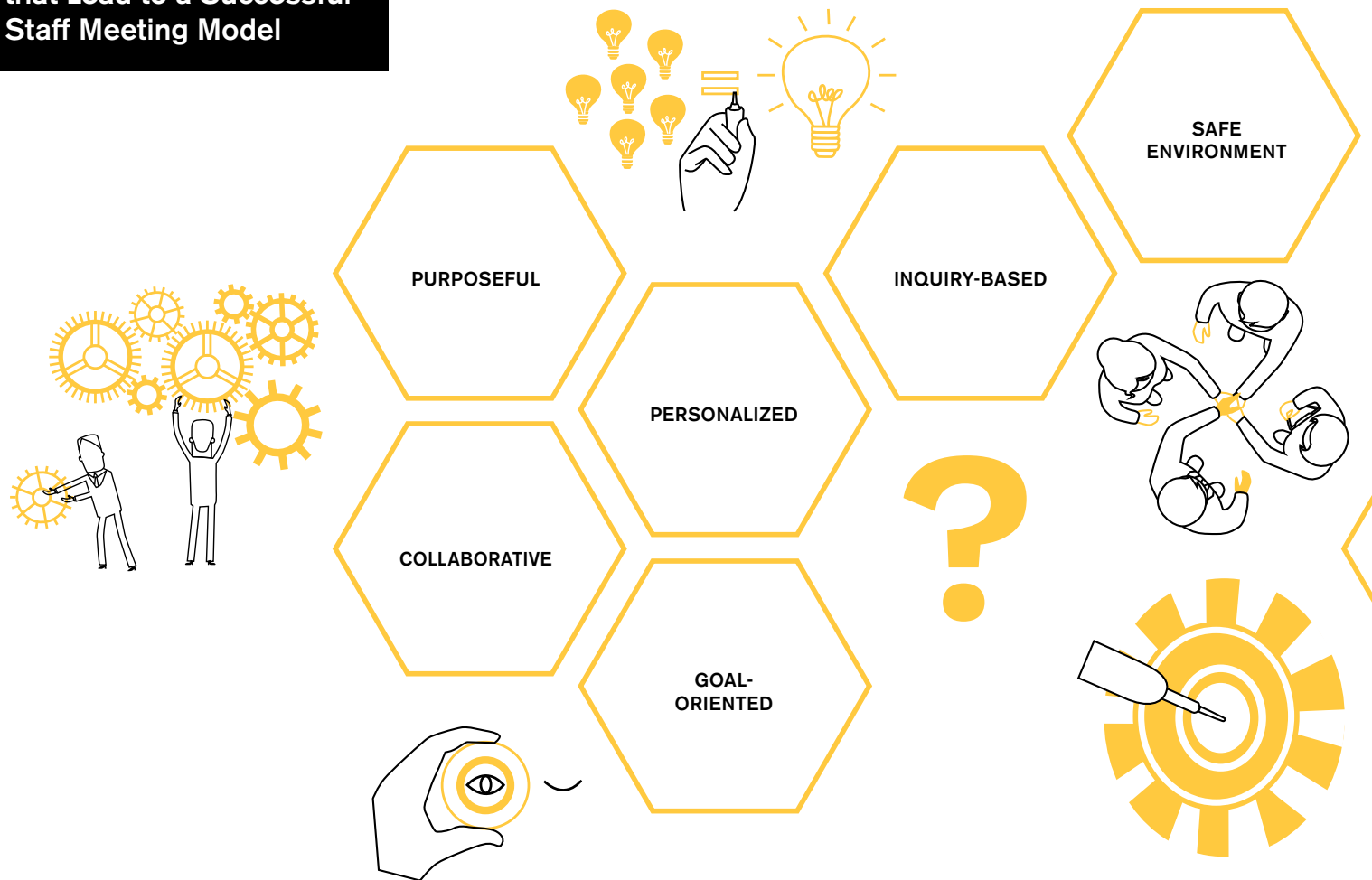
In the end, administrators need to be comfortable giving up control of the learning and the notion of "one size fits all" professional development. Educators are professionals and know where their interests lie and what their needs are. As leaders, we need to create a culture that deeply values teacher-learning, and support educators through differentiating the learning. When we create a model that encompasses the seven key components discussed above and when you trust your teachers to engage in their own learning interest, the magic will happen.

The Impact

The feedback received from our teachers about the new professional development learning format was that

- the "try, fail, learn, try again to attain success" motto was adopted
- teachers were adopting a growth mindset and modelling it for their students
- they became adopters of multiple opportunities for assessment prior to evaluation leading to increased student engagement and greater

productivity in the students' learning, demonstrating the implementation of an assessment and evaluation process leading to increased student achievement

- learning groups had new questions emerge that prompted a desire to continue learning, demonstrating the creation of a collaborative learning community working to engage today's 21st century learners.

When reflecting on the overall impact of this change, we saw

- increased interest in learning and professional development
- teachers more enthusiastic about the process, when we initiated it again this year and
- changes in how we teach, evaluate, connect and learn.

What We Learned

This new approach has taught us some valuable lessons. First, when educators choose their own professional development focus, they become much more invested in the learning. They show up ready to
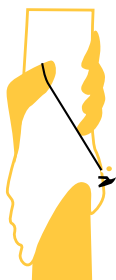
collabrate, email their group when absent, set clear goals for their meetings and stay engaged until the goal is achieved. No one leaves early. In fact, some groups meet for 90 minutes and set up additional meetings in between staff meetings.

Second, the learning that happens is deeper. The passion they bring to this style of learning leads them to refine their focus and really dig down.

Third, there is a unique trust within groups comprised of educators leading educators with a common interest. This allows teachers to comfortably try and fail, and try again. Staff attend group meetings and share what didn't go well with their peers, while others can offer strategies to use next time. We have seen that our teachers don't give up and succumb to failure, but actively seek out the opportunity to learn, grow and try again. They have adopted a more organic growth mindset.

Our teachers engaged in learning that led them to explore, in an authentic way, concepts like growth mindset, aspects of *Growing Success*, assessment and evaluation, critical thinking, the power of relationships developed through collaborative problem solving and teaching in today's 21st century classroom. Because teachers were passionate about what they were exploring, it led to sustained, job-embedded professional development. It led to change. ▲

Dr. Sunaina Sharma is a program leader and secondary teacher who strives to put learners' needs at the forefront of all program planning, classroom teaching and professional learning so that students are participating in authentic and relevant knowledge construction. @DrSunainaSharma, #SPARKC

✉ sharmas@hdsb.ca

Rebecca Newcombe is a secondary vice-principal who advocates for all students, in particular those with challenging behaviour (CPS and ThinkKids), in addition to staff professional learning that is differentiated, empowering, job-embedded and has an impact on our students' engagement. @Mrs_Newcombe
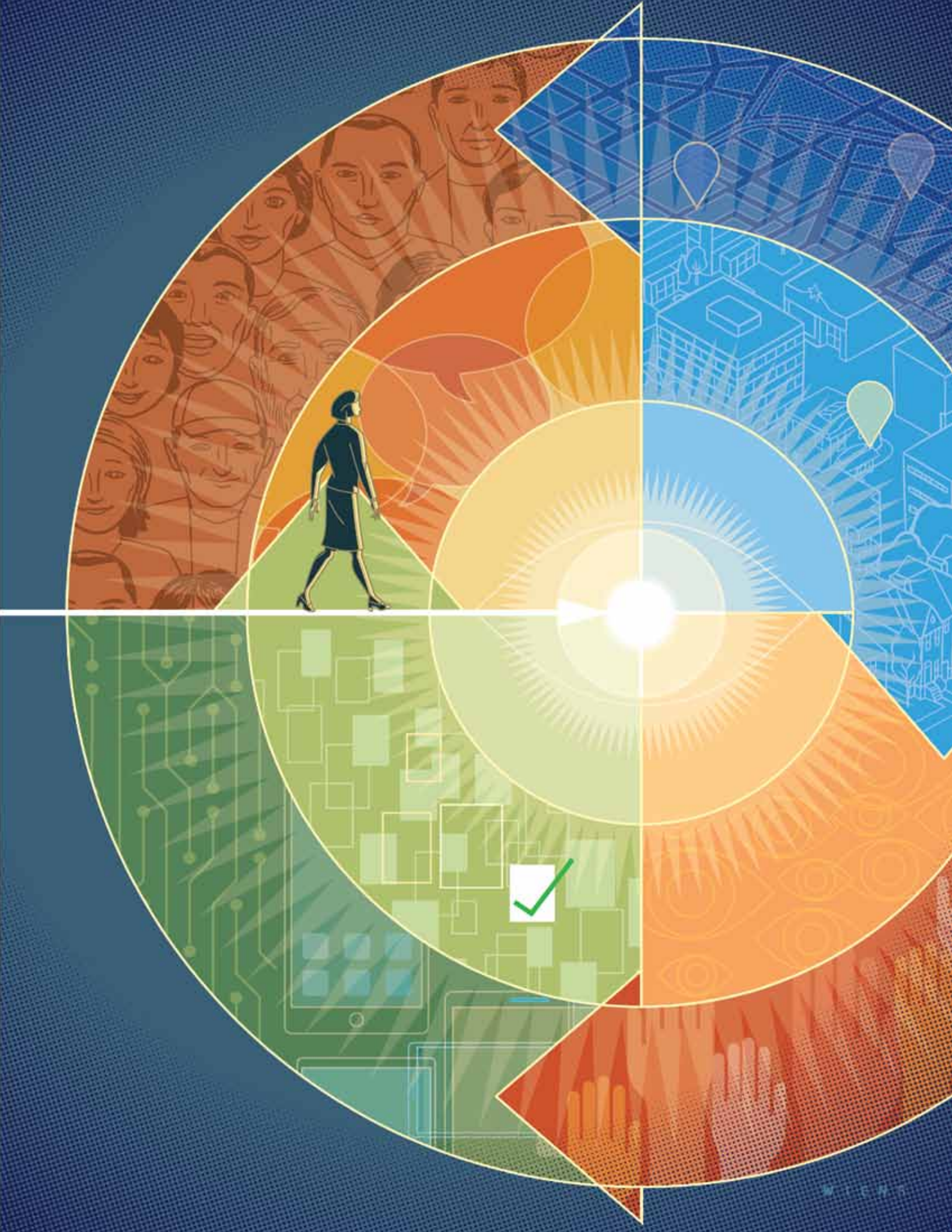
✉ newcomber@hdsb.ca

LEARNER-CENTRED

Balancing both
managerialism
and professional
collaboration
in your learning
communities

By Connor Pratt
Illustration by Carl Wiens

The Knife's Edge

As an educator in a board with declining enrollment, I
have spent the last decade of my career teaching at
four different high schools, and in as many as three
different departments at a time. Through each of these
opportunities, I have been fortunate to be part of many
Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), working
alongside colleagues to build excellent resources and
develop strategies to support student learning.

Despite that experience, the lack of consistency, shifts in focus, inability to work with a consistent group of peers and the overall increasing demands of the profession have left me, and frankly many educators with whom I have worked, feeling … well, strained.

As initiatives and data demands pile on, it leads to a feeling of disassociation from the tasks at hand. For me, this sense is even stronger.

I never know if I will be in a department or a school past the end of a semester, making it difficult to connect with the power of the professional learning that **could** take place. With my social science background, I have spent time trying to put a name on this nagging feeling and realized that what I lacked was a sense of efficacy.

I am well aware that teaching should be a collaborative profession. Shifting to a more collaborative model requires cultivating an environment in which everyone is focused on a collective purpose – educators working together to develop strategies, seek solutions and assist each other in improving student learning.

Again, as a social scientist, I was submerged in a sense of cognitive dissonance, asking how I could have both a sense of personal efficacy and cultivate collaborative relationships.

About three years ago, I started a Master of Education program. A few months later, I was presented with Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM) 159: *Collaborative Professionalism*. Reading through it, my neurons started firing and I saw a way to resolve my ongoing conundrum.

The Issue of Efficacy

PPM 159 explains that collaborative professionalism "improve[s] student achievement and well-being of both students and staff" (p. 1). Effective collaboration can improve both teacher self-efficacy – a teacher's personal sense of competence – and collective efficiency – the perceptions of teachers that the efforts of all individuals in the school will have a positive impact on students. Jenny Donohoo

explains in *Collective Efficacy: How Educators' Beliefs Impact Student Learning* (2016), that collaboration as well as teacher and collective efficacy correlates with an improvement in student learning. Efficacy, collaborative professionalism, and student learning are all interconnected.

PPM 159, though, is not a silver bullet. It is only a starting point, noting that "[d]istrict school boards and school authorities will establish a mechanism, or use existing mechanisms, to foster consultation, collaboration, and communication [towards] the implementation of new and existing initiatives" (p. 3). The PPM is prescriptive in some respects, but also offers flexibility in its development and implementation. It made me question how to both foster collaboration, while increasing a sense of efficacy.

Thinking back to PLCs I considered how the model could be improved, with both new and modified elements, to increase the degree to which it accomplishes the goals of collaborative professionalism, including how the efficacy of teachers and other educators can, relatedly, be improved.

The Problem

I decided to devote my time as a Master of Education student to researching teachers' sense of a lack of efficacy, as it links to effective collaboration. Much of the literature presented what could be described as a dual view of managerialism and professionalism – a bureaucratic versus a collaborative arrangement. In each case, there is a clear separation between the manager and the professional, limiting both collaboration and a sense of efficacy. The simple answer seemed to be to shift to an entirely teacher-managed model, but that quickly appeared as something that would be problematic in its own way.

Due to the complex nature of public schools, a wholly professional driven model of collaboration does not present a clear solution. Ontario education is not only demographi-

cally and geographically complex, but each board, and each school has its own internal politics and dynamics. Even among schools that appear similar, internal dynamics can make a difference in policy reception and policy implementation.

This complexity precludes the implementation of a central model of organization, planning or instruction. It also reinforces the importance of a collaborative PLC model, one that can adapt to the nuances of each individual school, board or group of teachers and professionals.

The Question

From this foundation, I had to ask: How might managerial foci, such as a required mechanism of accountability, be combined with a model that allows for improved teacher efficacy? How can this approach provide enough structure and cohesion to ensure productivity, and allow for the required flexibility needed for the diversity across both boards and schools? How can it function as a synthesis of accountability and agency?

To find an answer I considered what a protocol – flexible enough to provide teacher agency, increase a sense of teacher efficacy, include adaptability to the needs of specific school and/or board and provide measures of accountability to school boards and the ministry – might look like.

Towards a Balance

There are ways to balance both the required managerialism, and the required liabilities of a more collaborative model. James Spillane (along with Matthew Shirrell and Megan Hopkins), in *Designing and Deploying Professional Learning Committees* (2016), and Megan Tschanen-Moran, in *Trust Matters* (2016), looked at how with careful design, PLCs can be designed and deployed to combine **both** collegial and bureaucratic structures.

The authors explain that managers can work to develop organizational conditions where educators have the discretion to use their professional judgement to respond to student needs

and other contextual factors. Within an organized structure educators are able to continually develop their practice and competence, while still providing a measure of accountability.

The Rationale

It is while walking along the proverbial knife's edge, balancing both required managerialisms and room for professional collaborations, that I determined I could build a PLC protocol. To maintain this balance, there must be an underlying foundation of trust between all parties involved. My protocol presents a measure of accountability, which can underlie this relationship of trust.

I began with Donohoo's Collaborative Teacher Inquiry Four-Stage Model, which provided me with a framework to guide teacher-led inquiry. I then thought of my own experiences, and considered that a challenge in enacting this model is that external expectations of accountability may be inserted into the process, to meet board or ministry initiatives or to track particular data sets. Although there is potential value in these measures, this decreases the degree to which established goals of teacher and collective efficacy can be actualized. It is in the accountability gap that I situated my personal adaptations of Donohoo's model.

After careful consideration, conferring with colleagues, particularly department chairs, I worked on drafting a protocol, situated around five steps and critical guiding questions.

In this modified model, members of a PLC team use guiding questions to structure their focus at each stage, while the planning occurs both sequentially and circularly. While determining their focus in the first step, groups also determine how they will measure and report on their findings. Reports can be qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both. Possible methods of reporting might include, but are not limited to, a portfolio, PowerPoint or video. Results can be presented to other PLC groups, in very short presentations, including time for discussion. My protocol specifically

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION can improve both teacher self-efficacy – a teacher's personal sense of competence and **COLLECTIVE EFFICIENCY** – the perceptions of teachers that the efforts of all individuals in the school will have a positive impact on students.

① Plan   PLC group considers:

- What is our focus?
- Why is this focus important?
- What do we want to achieve (intended outcomes)?
- How do we plan to go about executing it?
- How do we plan to observe it?
- What will we consider as measures of success, or areas for improvement?
- How do we plan on reporting our results (consider step 5 while engaged in step 1)?
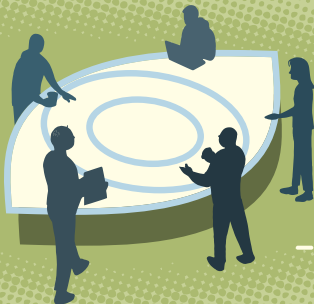
② Act

- Meet and co-plan/co-develop according to action plan.
- Determine how to track observations, results (make these specific to the plan)
- Plan how to communicate the expectations/goals to students.
- Execute plan (in a collaborative manner, as far as possible).

③ Observe & Provide Feedback

- Observe students, their process, product and conversations (based on measures determined in steps 1 and 2).
- Discuss progress and relative strengths and weaknesses in meetings, to refine and support the action plan.
- Modify as warranted.

④ Assess

- Look at student data.
- Assess based on initial framework and expectations.
- Consider and discuss their professional learning as a team, and strengths and weaknesses of their project and provide feedback.

⑤ Report

- Present the focus, plans, observations, findings and relative strengths and weaknesses of your PLC to other teams.
  This can present opportunities to continue with this team, present ideas for other teams, provide new ideas or new directions.
- Present a final thought – where do you see this going to improve (1) student learning and (2) collective efficacy?
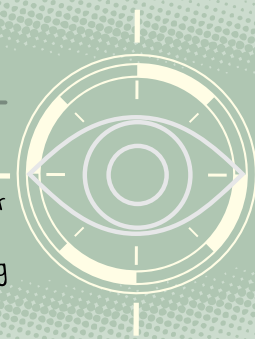
presents a measure of accountability, which can underlie this relationship of trust.

In this iteration, groups have more flexibility in their focus and are accountable to themselves and their peers forming a foundation of something that can be reported to boards or the ministry. Further, groups are not bound by a department or even a school, but instead by a common focus for the yearly cycle.

The foundation, upon which this protocol is built, does not provide a proscriptive method, but rather a suggested working framework. In each iteration, based on the dynamics of the individuals, groups, schools and boards involved, the protocol functions as a working document, adjusting and adapting to different contexts. The intent is for the protocol itself to adapt and grow as part of a collaborative process.

The Protocol Model
The questions and outline of steps on the opposite page are intended to guide teams in determining and structuring their meetings, as well as assist them in planning with their final goals in mind.

The Role of Instructional Leaders
To facilitate the balance in collaborative structure, internal teacher leadership is central. A teacher leader, such as a secondary department chair or an agreed upon PLC facilitator, is required. This individual should be someone to act in both a managerial role, ensuring administrative and documentative tasks are complete, and fostering an environment of trust, respect and collaboration.

James Spillane, in his 2005 article *Distributed Leadership*, explains that the teacher leader functions as part of the larger coordination of individuals and recognizes that the role of the leader is to encourage collaboration, rather than to manage all interactions. The teacher leader sees the objectives of the group as not just the product created by their actions, but as a result of cumulative interactions. This individual is central in bridging the gap between managerial and collaborative professionalism.

Collaborative professionalism, teacher self-efficacy and collaborative efficacy are all shown to have an impact on student learning. PPM 159 presented me with ideas on how to enhance the effectiveness of PLCs, increasing the opportunities for collaboration and teacher efficacy.

Improvements in these areas leads to improvements in student learning. Shifting away from a reliance on the management of teachers to trusting education professionals to justify and critique their own learning – will enable a more holistic enactment of provincial policy. Used effectively, PLCs allow educators to relate policy to their work in a meaningful manner, opening the door for professional collaborations to take place and building trust among partners. The protocol suggested here, if enacted and adapted, presents a conceivable and adaptable framework for aligning education policy directly with the goals of collaborative professionalism.▲

Connor Pratt is a secondary educator and has been with the Lakehead District School Board for the last 14 years. @ConnorPrattMC

✉ connor_pratt@lakeheadschools.ca

Mark Your Calendar

Check out a few of our upcoming program offerings!

Emerging Leader Development Program
ELDP Module 7
February 22 – 29

Starting with Self-Care:
Put your oxygen mask on first
New Administrators Webinar Series
March 24 3:00 – 4:00pm

Growing Your Personal Leadership Resources (PLRs)
PDC Module 8
March 28 – April 4
Registration Deadline: March 21

Leading the Innovative School
PDC Module 9
March 30 – May 3
Application Deadline: March 16

Leading the Kindergarten Program
PDC Module 9
March 30 – May 3
Application Deadline: March 16

Life-Balance for Aspiring Leaders
ELDP Module 9
April 25 – May 2
Registration Deadline: April 18

Feedback/Feedforward:
Where do we go next?
New Administrators Webinar Series
April 28 3:00 – 4:00pm

Instructional Leadership for School Improvement
PDC Module 2
May 4 – June 7
Application Deadline: April 20

For more information on the events and courses listed, visit our online events calendar.

OPC Staff Contacts

President
Nancy Brady
president@principals.ca

Communications
Peggy Sweeney
psweeney@principals.ca

General Inquiry
admin@principals.ca

Professional Learning
learning@principals.ca

Executive Director
Allyson Otten
aotten@principals.ca

Protective Services
Aditi Sayed
asayed@principals.ca

Membership Services
membership@principals.ca
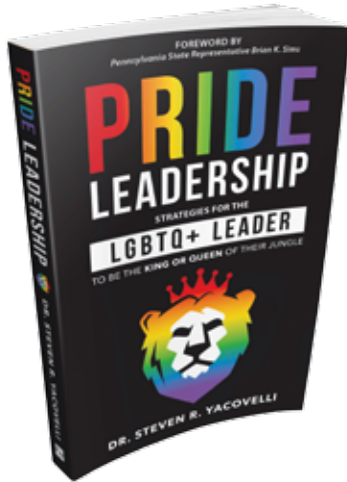
Pride Leadership: Strategies for the LGBTQ+ Leader to be the King or Queen of their Jungle

By Dr. Steven R. Yacovelli
Publish Your Purpose Press
ISBN: 978-1-9463-8467-6
Reviewed by Barry Bedford

As a student in public schools in the '80s, attending several universities in the '90s, I was unaware of school leaders who identified as LGBTQ+. Sure, everyone would hear rumours in the hallways of a teacher with a "gentleman friend" or an "overly athletic" female gym teacher. These rumours were, of course, unsubstantiated and met with giggles and faces of disgust. I certainly never knew a public-school administrator who was openly gay. I never considered it a possibility.

This book grabbed my interest as I'd never read a leadership book written specifically for the LGBTQ+ community. Members of the LGBTQ+ community have much in common, one of which is encountering barriers in attaining leadership positions. Often, we must do so while hiding who we are. *Pride Leadership* demonstrates how we can use these experiences as powerful leadership skills.

Pride Leadership is as much an informative read for straight allies hoping to gain a better understanding of shared experiences, as it is for members of the LGBTQ+ community. The self-reflection questions to be completed after reading assist in considering your own biases. Author Dr. Yacovelli focuses on six leadership competencies: having authenticity, leadership courage, leveraging empathy, effective communication, building relationships and shaping culture, all while ensuring we don't take ourselves too seriously.

The book is an engaging one that reaches the LGBTQ+ population, for whom there has been a scarcity of material regarding leadership geared specifically for us. The many examples and references to current "pop/gay culture" make it an entertaining read, leaving you feeling as though the author is speaking to you directly. It doesn't get trapped in research or data, but is more of a conversation with a man who has walked the walk. He shares his experiences, childhood, identity, mistakes and pitfalls, all while ensuring you know you are not alone.

Education prides itself on thinking things have "gotten better" for the LGBTQ+ population, but in my opinion it hasn't for many of us. Being an open member of the LGBTQ+ community can still be a barrier for many school leaders. Our identity, whether open or suspected, makes us easy fodder for angry parents and community members. It isn't only from those outside our organizations. Throughout my career, I have fallen victim to homophobia and heterosexism as an administrator and as an Education Officer from other educators and supervisors. I believe some colleagues, while they consider themselves allies, feel it is easier to simply look the other way, not to engage.

This book shows that regardless of how others may view our identities, our students and schools would benefit from more leaders openly identifying as LGBTQ+. Thank you Dr. Yacovelli for being a voice in an arena that for too long, has remained silent. ▲

Barry Bedford is a principal with the Durham District School Board. @MrBedford2
✉ Barry.bedford@ddsb.ca

Visionaries and Risk-Takers Wanted

The neo-pioneer spirit in public education

We are traversing a new frontier in public education with extraordinary complexities and few straightforward paths. More than ever, we need shared understandings of how the

success of schools should look in the 21st century. Hence, there's a necessity for what I term a **neo-pioneer spirit**, which audits, deconstructs and appropriates present realities to fashion a world characterized by more equitable, sustainable outcomes.

Neo-pioneers are visionary and resourceful risk-takers who strive to create and experience something better and more relevant. They are effective trackers who aren't disoriented by the unfamiliar. Open-minded, spiritual and non-colonial, they are in touch with their own intuition and surroundings. They mindfully and courageously unearth, pursue and celebrate the common good in our expanding and ever-changing world.

Our emergent global reality demands a new and synergistic paradigm that better promotes dialogue, collaboration, equity and stability, in order to more thoroughly address diversity issues. Of

course, while we focus on differences in our quest to best meet the needs of each and every constituent, we must never do so at the expense of diminishing the commonalities that hold the fabric of our communities intact.

As neo-pioneers, we achieve relevance through embracing diversity – demonstrating cultural knowledge about ourselves and others, finding ways to engage students and their families, and cultivating authentic community partnerships. Admittedly, for neo-pioneers, meaningful, reciprocal relationships with stakeholders aren't just sensible; they're vital to education reform.

Today's youth need to be more highly equipped to derive solutions that are authentic, timely and fair. Our efforts at knowledge creation require developing deep thinkers who are markedly conscious, caring, flexible, collaborative, efficacious and proficient. So we

must train our students to be creative leaders and problem-solvers who can skilfully negotiate boundaries and navigate multiple modalities in disparate settings. Likewise, we must teach them to hold high expectations and pursue big dreams with tenacity and equanimity.

I believe it is essential to take the bold step to restructure our schools, through rethinking the importance that we have placed on sorting students into grade levels, presumed destinations and achievements measured by marks. A renewed focus is needed on truly educating the whole child.

Finally, neo-pioneers invariably resist and reject the ills of the status quo. They recognize the moral urgency to act as we tread into the unknown, and continuously remind ourselves how things could be. This is a tall order. As education leaders, it is incumbent on each of us to embrace this neo-pioneer spirit as we engage in ongoing, robust self-reflection and measured risk-taking to achieve social justice and success for all. ▲

ILLUSTRATION: LUC MELANSON

David McAdam recently retired as secondary school principal, York Region District School Board. He serves the board on an ad hoc basis in leadership development and school operations.
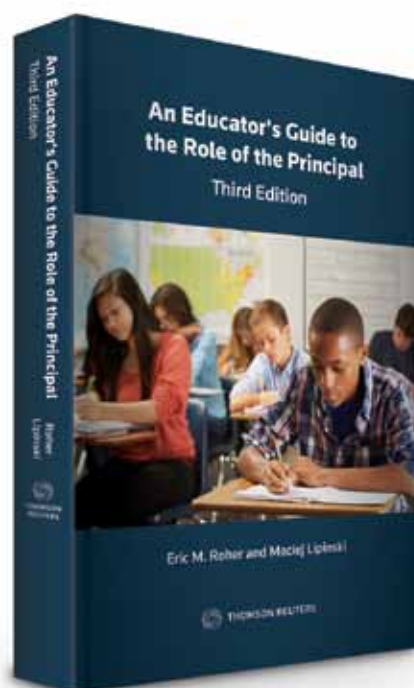
✉ david.mcadam@yrdsb.ca

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