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

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Increased Absences

The impact of staff shortages



While the role of principal and vice-principal can be extremely rewarding, there can be times that are difficult and challenging. School leaders across Ontario are struggling with staff shortages in all employee groups – teachers, educational

assistants (EAs), early child educators (ECEs), lunch supervisors, secretaries and custodians. Shortages have been a concern for many years, but they have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

Our priority as leaders is to focus on student achievement and well-being. However, the safety of students and staff is of the utmost importance, and it is being compromised with the increasing and ongoing staff shortages.

We begin our day checking the number of absences and ensuring coverage is provided, requiring a great deal of our time. This often means personally covering classes and supervising students. As a result, we're not available to complete our other duties and responsibilities.

This added stress is taking a toll on the well-being of our Members. Many have indicated a plan to retire early, while others are going on leaves due to added pressures.

Along with our partners at the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario and the Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, in November 2021 [we polled our Provincial Councillors](#) about staff shortages, to collect data on this important issue. Of the principals and vice-principals who completed the poll, we learned that teacher positions go unfilled in almost 34 per cent of their schools each day, and in 77 per cent of their schools each week.

The data showed that 62 per cent of the administrators polled uniformly reported spending up to 10 hours per week personally covering education teaching positions, taking away from their ability to respond to emergent student and staff needs, and to fulfill their daily administrator roles and responsibilities.

Among the OPC principal and vice-principal respondents, 66 per cent are spending up to 20 hours per week personally covering unfilled EA positions. Findings also indicated that 41 per cent of all respondents spend up to 10 hours per week personally covering unfilled secretarial positions, often at the start or end of the school day and over lunch.

Of those polled, 96 per cent are spending up to 15 hours per week managing the numerous tasks associated with vacancies. This time is in addition to their already intense workdays filled with health and safety needs related to COVID-19, as well as their ongoing administrative and legislative duties.

We are seeking short- and long-term solutions to this crisis. We advocated for a continuation of temporary certificates granted to students in their second year of Teachers' College, a step that the provincial government took at the end of November 2021. We have reached out to the Ontario Teachers' Federation requesting an extension to the number of days retired staff can work without pension penalty. We have asked the government to consider a number of avenues: whether temporary certificates would be possible for ECE students, how internationally

trained educators may more seamlessly join our sector and how to address the challenges that may be reducing the number of people interested in pursuing careers in education.

The staff shortage is a critical problem that must be addressed with strategies that will lead to positive outcomes for all. We need to ensure that our students are met by certified and qualified teachers and support staff every day when they come to school. This is especially true for our students with highest needs.

These poll findings have been shared with the Minister of Education. It is our hope that this data will help inform the critical nature of this issue, and we will continue to advocate, on behalf of all principals and vice-principals, for support in finding appropriate solutions. ▲



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SUBMISSIONS & IDEAS

Would you like to contribute to *The Register*?

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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.

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:





Author's note: This interview may contain content that some readers may find uncomfortable. However, it is Jacki's story and history, and we are respectful of that.

Territorial Student Program

By Peggy Sweeney
Illustration by Don Chrétien

Students benefit from an on-site First Nations mentor

Jacki Alto and her three siblings grew up in Alberta, moving around a lot because of her father's work as a heavy-duty mechanic. Her father was half Finnish, half Ojibwe. Her mother was Ojibwe Anishinaabe. During the many moves, her mother was the one constant in their lives. "My mom was a residential school survivor. Despite the challenges she experienced in that setting, she loved school and loved learning. She was a teacher for a while. She was always a big proponent and motivator to make sure that the four of us were well-read and that we understood what we read. Every night we had to either read for an hour or a chapter, whatever came last. We all became avid readers."







Two things have stayed with Jacki since her childhood: her love of learning and her mother's First Nations experiences.

Jacki attended school in Edmonton from kindergarten to Grade 3, but it was not always a positive experience. "I faced a lot of racism. I was beaten up quite regularly by groups of boys, so I learned to be a pretty good scrapper. My dad would talk to the principal but I don't remember the boys being punished. I remember them coming at me the same day that we had just had a conversation with the school and my parents."

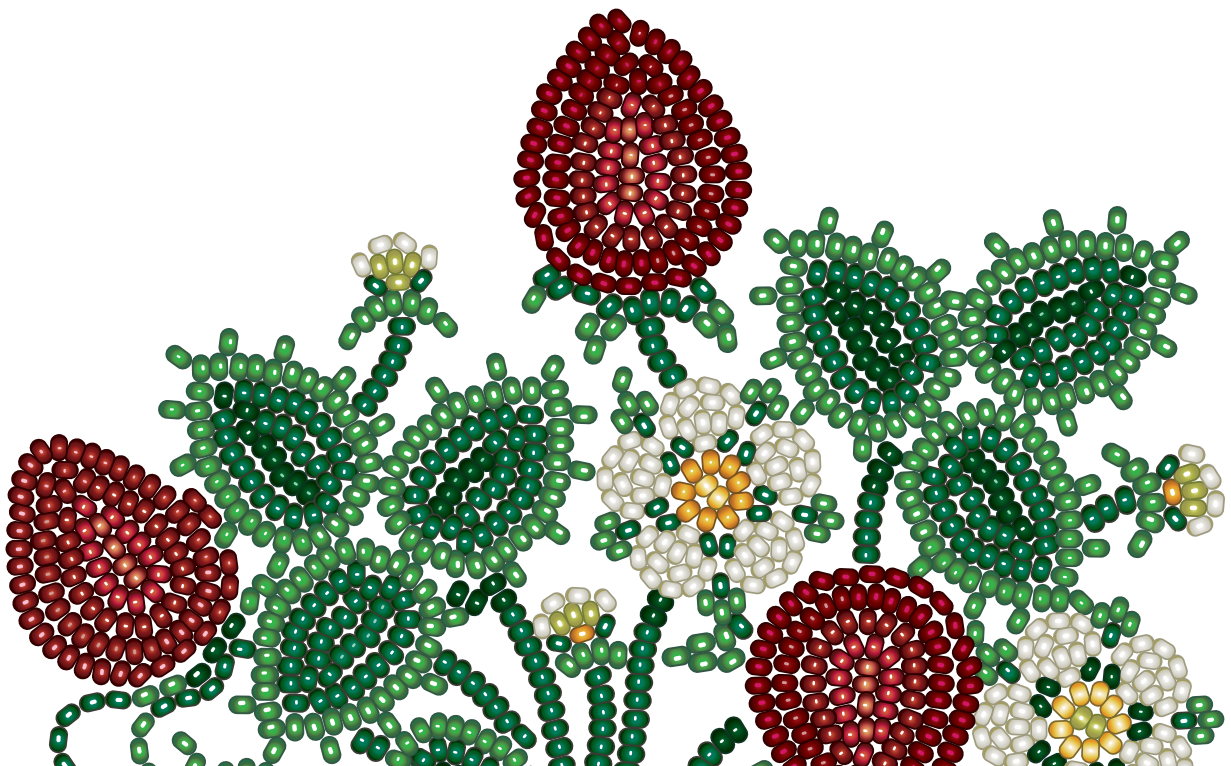
After Jacki finished Grade 3, the family moved to Thunder Bay. But the new setting didn't mean that things got easier. "At the beginning, it was rough. We had to fight our way to school, and then we had to fight our way home."

“

**I BELIEVE IN
SOCIAL JUSTICE,
AND I DID THAT
FOR MY MOTHER.
IT WAS ABOUT
GIVING PEOPLE
WITHOUT A VOICE,
A VOICE.”**

In Grade 8, the bullying returned – but this time by an adult. "The principal had a special dislike for me. She made Grade 8 very hard. She would harass me and grab me physically." One time, after Jacki had been physically assaulted by the principal, she lashed out, hitting the woman back. She was expelled two weeks before the end of Grade 8. "They wanted me to apologize, but I didn't see that it was my fault. My mom had also taught us about integrity. She told me that she didn't feel that I had to apologize and she continued to advocate for me." But without an apology, Jacki was not able to graduate. She ended up in an alternative school, where she finished her year.

When Jacki started high school, she again felt like she didn't fit in. "By then, I had a disdain for regular school. They put me in all general classes and I was bored. My guidance counsellor



spoke up on my behalf. He said I was an intelligent student who was being held back from opportunities by being registered in general courses. That was just the way it was back then.”

When Jacki was 18, trying to catch up with her courses and living on her own, she became pregnant and dropped out of school. But despite all the odds against her and the negative school experiences, she didn't give up. She applied for university as a mature student and now has two university degrees, one in Sociology.

The pull to Sociology again originated with her mother. “I believe in social justice, and I did that for my mother. It was about giving people without a voice, a voice.” She spent five years working in Thunder Bay for Dilico Family Care, a centre connecting child welfare, health care, mental health and addiction services for Anishinabek people. “I was always advocating for the families. We would find alternative arrangements to placing children in care, such as shared parent agreements where we would place kids with a neighbour or a friend to ensure that the child didn't end up in the foster care system. That would give the parents the chance to resolve the issues that were hampering their ability to provide safe and good parenting.”

Jacki then made the move to the education sector. She now works in three high schools in Thunder Bay, supporting First Nations students from the community of Armstrong and Whitesand First Nations, about three hours north of the city. “I knew I would be a good support person. I used to volunteer in the First Nations communities because they were having a hard time filling those positions in the remote areas. I met families there and developed a relationship with their support people. The role at the high schools let me build on the relationships I had developed and be a strong and knowledgeable advocate for the kids.”

She loves her job. “Working with young people is so much fun, since everything is still so new to them. Not only do I get the benefit of hanging out with the cool kids, but I'm also showing them that living a clean lifestyle – I don't drink or smoke – is beneficial, and that you can do it despite the pressures we have to face every day. I feel like I'm a good role model. I'm easy to talk to, and a lot of students come and see me privately.”

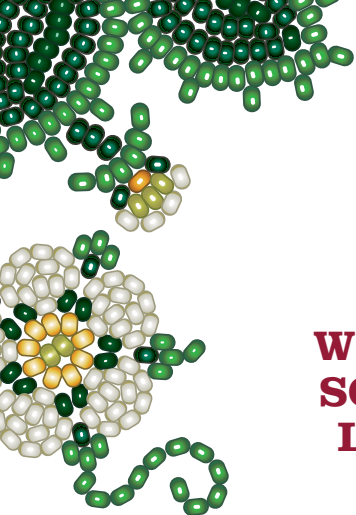


At the school, Jacki meets regularly with the students and helps them with issues they face after transitioning from a small community to the much bigger city of Thunder Bay. The students also receive lunch cards and monthly bus passes.

While leaving home is never easy, there are ways to make it a bit more comfortable. The parents of the students Jacki works with choose who their children will be staying with in the city. “That mitigates some of the concerns they may have about sending their children away to go to school. Many of the students who are here are with family members or friends of their parents, who have known the children for a considerable amount of time. That helps both the parents and the students with the transition.”

That's not to say there aren't challenges with the transition. “Understandably, the kids miss their community. They miss the cultural traditions of home. I've had students go back for the hunting season, as that was important to them. To be able to hunt and live in the bush for a couple of weeks was important. But they miss that time at school, so there's always a trade-off. And there are more ways to get into trouble in Thunder Bay, just because it's a bigger community.”

Some have questioned whether, instead of sending students away from home to attend school, the government should be building a school in their home communities. While acknowledging the difficulties students have in adjusting to the move, Jacki also sees an advantage to the current system. “I think it's better if they come to Thunder Bay, because eventually they're going to want to go to university. And we're giving them skills in high school on how to budget for themselves, how to clean up after themselves and how to



“

IT’S LIKE A TWO-WAY CULTURAL IMMERSION. WE CAN TEACH THEM THAT THERE ARE PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS TO DISAGREEMENTS AND HELP THEM LEARN HOW TO GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER.”

do their own laundry. So when they do go off to university and are living in a dorm, they’ve already learned some of those independent responsibilities. It’ll be familiar to them.”

In addition to helping the students from the First Nations communities, Jacki also sees a benefit to the rest of the student population in her work, helping them to understand and learn about the First Nations students, their lives, culture and communities. “It’s like a two-way cultural immersion. Kids are going to be kids and not everybody is going to get along. But we can teach them that there are peaceful solutions to disagreements and help them learn how to get along with each other.

“We need to teach and model the acceptance of diversity. Everybody has a right to be here and

to coexist and be peaceable. I see that reflected not only in the staff and the teachers, but the kids as well. Not everybody is the same. That peer mentoring is a lot more positive than it was when I was a kid.”

While Jacki believes that her role working with students from the First Nations communities is important, she also knows that the other staff in the school play an essential role as well. “The staff here are really doing a great job. They know which students are struggling and which ones are doing well. They check on the students and make sure they’re getting to class.

“The staff are integral to creating a welcoming and accepting school community. I’m so grateful to the teachers who care enough to come into our room to make sure that their

student is there and getting any help they need. They are engaged and taking an interest in the students. It’s a top-down model. The principal here is motivated. He knows all the students’ names. He asks what we can do culturally to inspire these students. Even the way the office staff treats every child with dignity – that didn’t always happen when I was young. And the students are benefiting because of it.

“When I talk to people about my job, I tell them that everything here is so encouraging. You can see that the students’ lives are more enriched. Caring and sharing really exist. The kids are here to be educated, but they also need to feel safe and like they belong. In our schools, they do. There’s that extra push to help them succeed. And that is critical. When I was growing up, we didn’t feel like anybody really cared whether we showed up or not. Here they’ve got accountability. Someone’s watching them and looking over their shoulder. That’s what they need.”

While Jacki’s personal experiences with school when she was young were not always positive, she has chosen to try to make things better for today’s students. She has learned that there are a few elements to the successful transition for students who move from their home community to a larger city to go to school: caring adults; acknowledgment, respect and encouragement of their culture; accountability; teaching First Nations’ traditions; staff who are engaged in and committed to the success of every student; and a nurturing environment. It is a model that is helping the current generation of First Nations students be accepted, cared for and successful along their education journey. ▲

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Seasons of Change

We invite you to join us

The first half of the 2021–22 school year has been challenging for our Members. Our Professional Learning department has continued to offer a variety of virtual learning opportunities to support you during this time. Our goal is to continue to provide virtual opportunities moving forward, while also turning our minds to a selection of face-to-face offerings in the near future.

Throughout the winter and spring of 2022, some of the available offerings will be more informal in nature. This includes our [Coffee Connections](#), a virtual space where Members can come together to discuss challenges they face and share effective strategies. As well, we have a growing repertoire of [self-directed courses](#), which provide learning that can be done on your time and at your own pace.

Looking toward the summer, the cancellation of the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) convention has opened up the calendar to new opportunities. This July, we will be offering both [virtual and in-person op-](#)

[tions](#) on various topics, as requested by participant feedback received through professional learning opportunities and our focus group. These include

New Administrator

Support Program

Visit our website for [summer and full year program](#) information.

Foundational Coaching Skills

with Kate Sharpe (in person)

- July 7 (part 1) and July 8 (part 2)

Back to Instructional Leadership

with Lawrence DeMaeyer and Nadine Trépanier-Bisson

- July 7 - Windsor (in person)
- July 11 - Sudbury (in person)
- July 13 - Toronto (in person and virtual)
- July 15 - Ottawa (in person)

Change Management

- July 12 and July 14 (virtual half days with Dr. Karen Edge, Dr. Ann Lopez and Lawrence DeMaeyer)

We invite all principals and vice-principals to register via our website under Professional Learning, as soon as possible, as spaces may be limited.

In August, we are planning a pre-conference in Toronto, on the theme of [Leading Forward Together](#). The half-day pre-conference for OPC Councillors, local leaders and board teams will take place on the afternoon of August 17. Following an address from the keynote speaker, table teams will have the chance to work together on topics that will support the creation of anti-oppressive and anti-colonial learning environments. The full-day conference will open with keynote speaker [Yassmin Abdel-Magied](#) and will include board presentations on student voice to support equity work, as well as two sets of parallel sessions.

We continue to remain open to your suggestions about our learning formats and content. If you do not yet receive our weekly email Bulletin, which highlights these and other upcoming learning opportunities, you can sign up on our [website](#). ▲

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All

Students

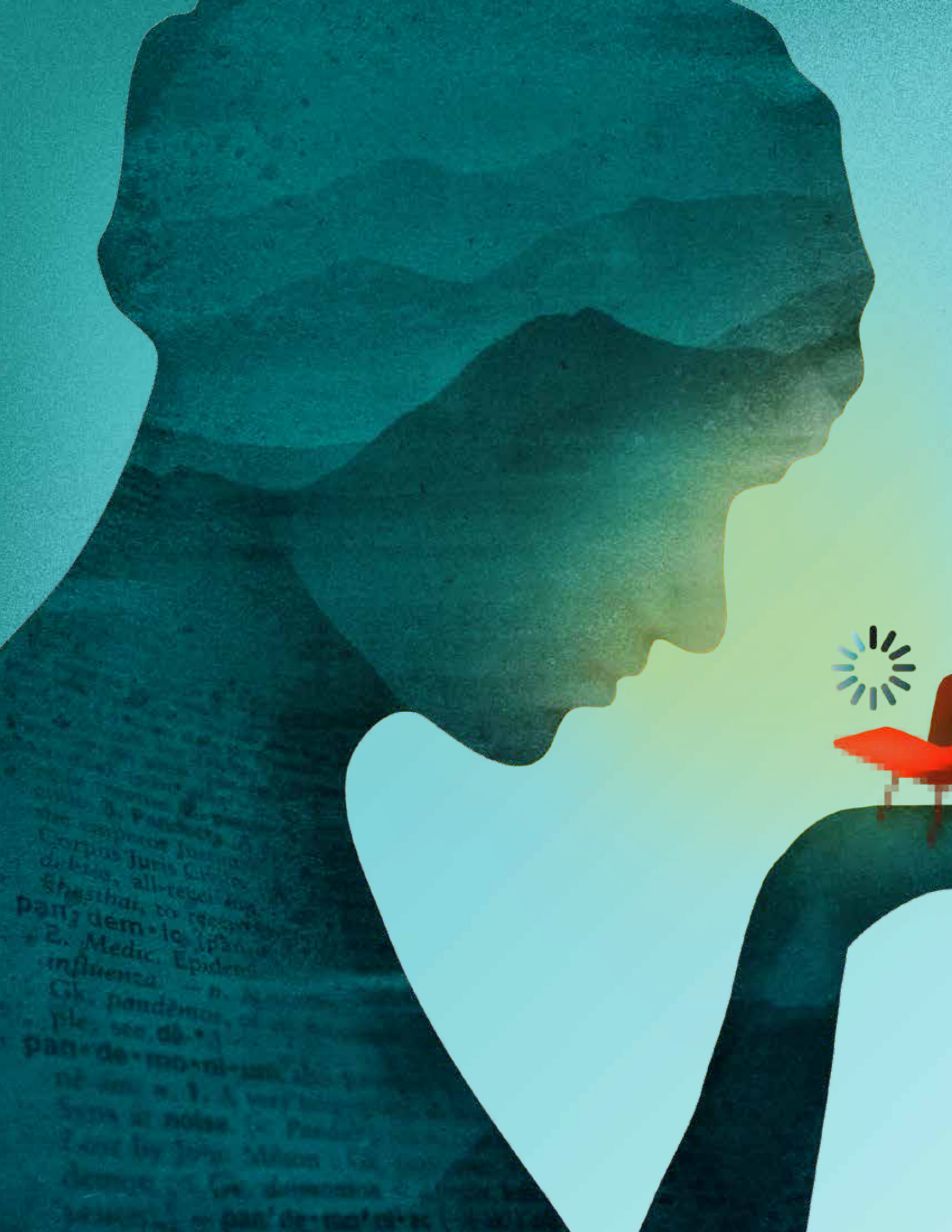
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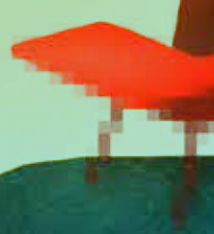
Succeed

Fostering student engagement
in remote learning

By Eryn Smit
Illustration by Christine Roy



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The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruption across the globe starting in 2020, and its ongoing implications present both challenges and opportunities to elementary school educators. When Ontario's Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, announced in March 2020 that all schools would be closed to prevent the spread of the virus, it quickly became apparent that our schools were unprepared to make this transition.

This unpreparedness resulted from a perceived lack of continuity between the remote and the physical classrooms. It caused us, as educators, to think about our students' digital literacy, the adaptability of planned instruction for an online environment, the importance of teacher-student relationships, the value of formal and informal collegial relationships, and the importance of offering support to vulnerable students when they aren't physically in our care. Each challenge on its own provided a significant barrier for elementary school educators, but, unfortunately, we were not able to address each of them individually. Instead, we had to manage

them all simultaneously, on our own, while we also cared for ourselves and our families.

While remote and in-person learning look different, they remain the same at their core. No matter the setting, learning is about the child first: assessment, evaluation, feedback, encouragement, community, social skill development and engagement.

Students' core needs don't change, but the way in which we teach and engage them must. The intentional efforts of school leaders are key to helping our teachers develop the knowledge and skills needed to engage our students as this pandemic persists, no matter what learning looks like.

Providing a Foundation for Teachers

Teachers can begin to plan for teaching in the digital world when they understand its complexity. As Yong Zhao explains in the *American Journal of Education*, the digital world is not just a repository of things to do, but is as complex as the real world. Educators can best serve their students when they learn about digital culture as they would any other unfamiliar culture, examining its various dimensions and thinking through how those dimensions affect learning in the digital world. When teachers provide explicit instruction to their students in this digital environment – such as when to mute and unmute, when (or if) one's camera should be on, or when to type in standard English versus

Educators can best serve their students when they learn about digital culture ...

emoji-based entries – we help to align the social dimensions of the digital and physical worlds.

Brenda McMahon and John Portelli’s research demonstrates that students who feel that their voice is represented in their school and classroom tend to also identify a strong personal connection to their school. Engaging the whole school community in creating meaning for virtual schools allows staff, students, parents and caregivers opportunities to show what matters most to them when it comes to school. Using digital tools to create collaborative bulletin boards and virtual classrooms, and to visualize student thinking, all help to increase student engagement in remote learning.

Digital learning does not need to be synonymous with blackline masters and multiple-choice assessments. Rich learning tasks can be

introduced, monitored and assessed in the virtual environment, and schools will likely see that the sophistication of learning will directly relate to the technological literacy of their staff.

Many school boards produced their own training resources for staff during the first wave of school closures, and have continued to develop them over time. Many of these resources (such as the Lambton Kent DSB’s [extensive video library](#) of training on a wide range of virtual meeting platforms) are freely available to help staff develop greater comfort levels with technology.

Remote Professional Learning Communities

Our school staff misses the way they were accustomed to connecting with and supporting each other. While the pandemic has disrupted many of our familiar methods of learning, it is possible to manage professional learning communities despite the challenges. When teachers expressed a desire to work together during periods of remote learning, we found that our same-grade partners could co-teach lessons to combined classes. For example, one teacher wanted to learn more about Number Talks, so her teaching partner modelled online Number Talks for the class while the first teacher observed key instructional strategies and their impact on students.

This freedom to team-teach and collaborate allows teachers in remote environments to approach teaching from a position of passion and raises the potential for capacity building across divisions as teachers learn from each other. [Thomas Toch](#), director of FutureEd, advocates for a broadening of the elementary school schedule to allow for more effective academic interventions. Teachers are often frustrated by their persistent inability to create space in their classroom for one-to-one and small-group learning. The time for these kinds of crucial supports can be more readily created in the remote learning environment. Toch recommends that schools simplify the daily schedule, focus heavily on social-emotional regulation and use a blend of synchronous and

asynchronous learning activities so that teachers can create the time and space needed to directly support student learning.

Curriculum partners and resource teachers play an important part in the Professional Learning Community (PLC) cycle. While homeroom teachers make efforts to connect with every student, the reality is that some students need a special adult in their life who unlocks a love of learning. When teacher-based interventions are not showing signs of effectiveness, curriculum partners in physical education, French and the arts may be able to provide points of connection in their own way. Their efforts can be included in records of PLC action as teams move through the year.

Creating Learning Environments that Engage Students

It does not matter if learning occurs in a traditional classroom setting, specialized classrooms or remote learning modes: learning must engage the student. Research included in Ontario’s Capacity Building Series: Getting Started with Student Inquiry shows that increases in student engagement result in greater student achievement, and students engage when the learning is interesting, enjoyable and self-fulfilling.

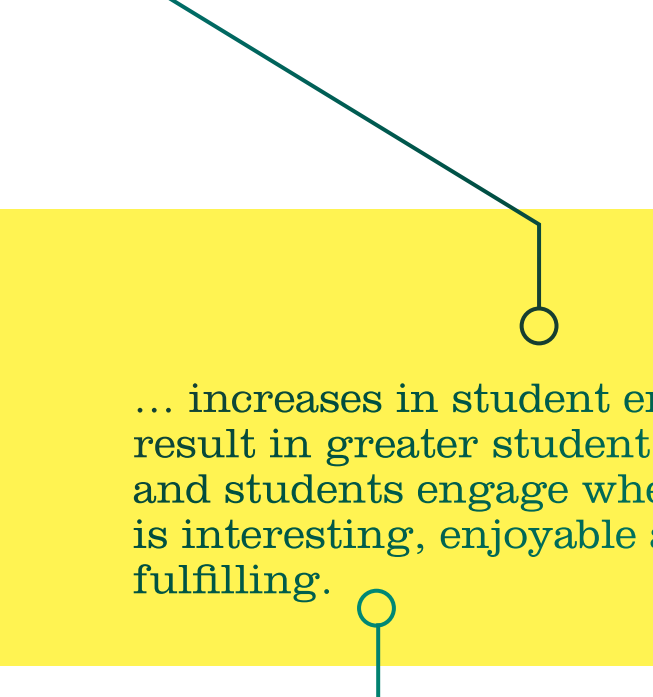
This pandemic has exposed the equity issues that are connected directly to the question of student engagement. Daniel Vallee demonstrates the dominance of the middle-class lens as it affects educational policy in the 20th century, and the exclusionary nature of many aspects of education in North America – including student engagement. These aspects of education represent the dominant voice of policy-makers who have been overwhelmingly white, male and aimed at generating productivity from middle-class citizens.

When we consider our diverse school populations, we need to think critically about what impact remote learning has on students from racialized or low socio-economic communities. Remote learning environments tend to highlight inequity, and so we need to challenge our assumptions about students’

... schools will likely see that the sophistication of learning will directly relate to the technological literacy of their staff.

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... increases in student engagement result in greater student achievement, and students engage when the learning is interesting, enjoyable and self-fulfilling.

ability to access technology, focus freely on learning and even find a quiet space to learn.

Relationships lie at the core of student engagement, and the development of strong and fulfilling relationships is a key factor in sustaining strong student engagement. The reality is that students rarely disengage from school buildings; rather, they disengage from the adults in the building, as Daniel Vallee writes. Students need to connect to their teachers early, and in meaningful ways throughout their educational careers, to endure the challenges that threaten their engagement.

Remote learning for elementary school students can expose those relationships that lack depth. As Yanghee Kim and Jeffrey Thayne demonstrated in *Distance Education*, simply being available online or posting videos to digital classrooms has no measurable impact on relationship development. Instead, it requires an intentional investment of time and focus on the part of the instructor to develop strong relationships and achieve the gains in achievement associated with high levels of engagement.

Factors that Cause Students – and Teachers – to Disengage

Despite our best efforts, students will disengage when we pivot to remote learning. School leaders look to classroom teachers to connect with students, develop relationships and provide engaging learning – but what happens when

the teachers are the ones disengaging? I myself have seen the great impact remote learning has had on my work-life balance, and with every passing week it feels as though the balance tips further and further away from “life” and toward “work.” What is critical is that staff feel the support of their school leaders as they navigate the turbulent waters that can be found at the outset of remote learning. Staff need to know that their administrators are available, willing and concerned about their well-being while continuing to encourage new initiatives that support the needs of the remote community and that can be sustained.

Student mental health has been impacted significantly by the pandemic. Darren Courtney and his colleagues report in *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* that rates of depression and anxiety among youth have risen significantly over the past two years, which comes as no surprise to those of us in education. We know that focusing on mental health and well-being, providing strategies to all to increase feelings of happiness and satisfaction, and equipping teachers with resources like [School Mental Health Ontario](#), are all key strategies to increase students’ feelings of attachment to school.

Equity issues and parent capacity are significant factors that affect student engagement as well. Students worried about food and housing insecurity lose the respite that school provides, as they watch parents and caregivers struggle to

provide for their families. The absence of school breakfast and lunch programs during school closures shifted the financial burden of those meals back on families and, in addition, many families living in low-socio-economic conditions have found their ability to work in the service industry has been impacted significantly.

Interventions and Supports

We know that, despite our best efforts, not all students will transition smoothly to remote learning from the outset, while others fade in engagement over time. Attendance Works, an American organization supporting better school attendance, recommends four key indicators to help school administrators determine who is at risk of disengaging: contact, connectivity, relationships and participation. Schools should be able to contact caregivers consistently throughout the year through a variety of means, and reliable contact means school staff can provide interventions as needed. Helping families connect early and often to digital classrooms will ease transitions and help identify those families who will need access to technology or the Internet to support learning. Relationships – strengthened through daily check-ins, welcoming students back warmly after absences, the use of whole-class and small group conferencing, and planning events for the whole community – can be developed and sustained while we learn remotely. Finally, student participation can be measured through attendance, activity during learning sessions, work attempted and completed, and the percentage of assignments submitted by the due date (or at all).

For school leaders during extended periods of remote learning, warning systems can be created to monitor at-risk students. Indicators such as attendance records of cumulative and consecutive absences, declines in achievement on report cards and missing marks from teacher records can all be key sources of information. Students should be on the school radar if they are flagged as chronically absent, are struggling with mental health and/or are already disengaged. When transitions to peri-

ods of remote learning occur, school staff can reach out to these students and their families early and often to help them start strong.

Finally, support staff at both the school and system level can be deployed to intervene as necessary. Educational assistants can take on a supportive position for families and work with small groups of students. Special Education teachers can support teachers, maintain lists of students of concern and work directly with families to help them sustain remote learning. System-level staff can also be key human resources available to support both teacher learning and student engagement.

Conclusion

The changes forced on schools by the COVID-19 pandemic are significant, but they have created opportunities for educators to think critically about our practice in elemen-

tary schools and to develop a stronger understanding of how we can support teachers in engaging our students. School leaders can provide teachers with a strong foundation to build the flexibility and support needed to transition effectively and help create engaging learning environments that are sensitive to equity considerations. Being able to identify at-risk students is essential so that we can provide meaningful interventions when students disengage. Our students and families want to succeed, and understanding how engagement efforts translate to remote learning environments is key to helping us achieve our shared goals. ▲

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Why is it important for students to volunteer?

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- a. Helps to build leadership skills.
- b. Increases confidence and clear communication.
- c. Leads to better grades.
- d. Earns volunteer hours for graduation.
- e. All of the above.**



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This project has been partly funded by the Government of Canada through the Digital Literacy Exchange Program.

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WALLACE REPORT SUMMARY

Effective School Principals

Taking stock of two decades of research

By Anna Egalite, Jason A. Grissom and Constance A. Lindsay

The research community has long understood the importance of effective principal leadership. This topic has inspired thousands of individual research papers that span a multitude of methodological approaches and datasets. The consensus from these studies is clear: principal quality matters. The specifics of how effective principals¹ lead their schools toward successful outcomes, however, have been less obvious.

We recently completed a multi-year project, funded by the [Wallace Foundation](#), synthesizing two decades of research on the connection between principal leadership and school outcomes. We were especially interested in what effective principals **do**. To find out, we systematically identified, read and coded the best-available quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method American studies published since 2000. Some of the conclusions we made from this analysis reinforced what we already knew; other conclusions put a new spin on conventional wisdom. This summary will highlight what was learned.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS HAS NOT BEEN STATED STRONGLY ENOUGH

It has been understood that effective principals can have a critical impact on student achievement. Now, for the first time, we can comment on the strength of that impact. We relied on six high-quality studies using longitudinal administrative data from states or large school districts across the United States. Collectively, these studies leverage data from about 22,000 school principals.

What's important about these studies is that they can separate, statistically, principals' impacts from the impacts of many other factors in the school. Across these studies, replacing a below-average school principal (one at the 25th percentile in

effectiveness) with an above-average one (at the 75th percentile) results in achievement gains of about three additional months of learning in math and reading.

These effects are large and felt across all students – hundreds or even thousands – in the school. Beyond test scores, these studies detect evidence of a more effective principal in other important outcomes, such as student absenteeism, teacher satisfaction and teacher turnover. Indeed, given the magnitude and scope of principals' effects, we find it hard to envision a richer investment in a school than in the quality of its principal.

PRINCIPALS NEED THREE BROAD KINDS OF SKILLS

What do principals need to be able to do? We read and coded hundreds of qualitative and quantitative studies linking principals' skills and behaviours to school success. From this process, we identified three key skill areas, which we labelled "instruction," "people" and "the organization."

Instructional skills are those related to supporting and leading the school's instructional program: knowledge of quality instruction, feedback skills and understanding of teacher professional learning. People skills are those related to relationships and human development, including caring, communication and trust-building. Skills for the organization refer to a general class of management skills that transcend

schools – skills that would be needed to run any complex organization. These include skills for data use, personnel management and budgeting.

CERTAIN DOMAINS OF PRINCIPAL BEHAVIOURS ARE WORTH EMULATING

Our synthesis of the literature finds that these three skill areas support four domains of practice associated with more positive school outcomes. Together, these four domains offer a portrait of effective principals' activities.

1. Instructionally focused interactions with teachers

Effective principals work closely with classroom teachers to help improve the teachers' instructional practice. They take a structured approach to teacher observation. They use observation information to provide teachers with high-quality feedback and coaching, which evidence suggests translates into improvements in students' academic outcomes. They create other opportunities for high-quality teacher professional learning. They also use data to monitor student progress and inspire instructional improvement.

2. Building a productive school climate

High-performing school principals establish a robust school climate that allows teachers and support staff to spend their time on teaching and learning. Strong climates – those marked by a spirit of organizational learning, continuous improvement, trust, collective efficacy and an emphasis on academics – promote teachers' instructional effectiveness and student achievement.

Principals build strong climates by organizing their schools to help teachers and students feel safe, valued and supported. They demonstrate caring. They empower staff to lead. They foster trust by giving teachers autonomy to try new strategies, encourage staff to work together and demonstrate their own competence. Principals also look beyond the school walls to validate the community's culture and traditions.

3. Facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities

Integral to a strong climate is collaboration. Great principals facilitate teacher collaboration, which builds collective ef-

ficacy, lowers turnover and improves student achievement. Principals create conditions for collaboration by setting clear expectations, training teachers to collaborate and protecting common planning time. Professional learning communities (PLCs), which formalize teacher collaboration for authentic learning, are one commonly used approach to boosting teacher collaboration. PLCs are more effective when principals engage directly or when they leverage the expertise and engagement of other leaders in the school.

4. Managing personnel and resources strategically

Strong principals are strategic in how they manage scarce resources, thoughtfully allocating them in ways that will best support teaching and learning. Strategic managers work to recruit and hire strong teachers, place them with the students who need them most, and retain them year after year. Strategic teacher retention may also mean not retaining teachers who are not excelling, or who are a poor fit for the school. Strategic principals also pay attention to how they manage intangible resources such as time and external relationships.

PRINCIPALS MUST DEVELOP AN EQUITY LENS

Studies also highlight how equity-minded principals enact leadership toward improving school outcomes for **all** students. The domains of behaviour are the same, but equity is central. So instructional engagement might include brainstorming with teachers around instructional approaches that are culturally responsive and engage diverse learners. Climate building might include training staff on inclusivity. Collaboration might extend to engaging with diverse families for new ideas for meeting student needs. Strategic management might focus on diversifying the teaching staff to better respond to the needs of the full student community.

In summary, principals really matter. Our goal should be to equip every principal with the tools they need to lead for excellence and equity . . . and we have 20 years of research to point us toward those tools. ▲

Access the full report at wallacefoundation.org/principalsynthesis.

FOOTNOTE

- 1 While we focused our attention in this report primarily on school principals, a second [Wallace Foundation report](#) authored by Goldring, Rubin and Hermann, closely examines the role of the vice-principal. A third report, authored by Darling-Hammond and colleagues, will review the role of principal preparation programs and their features.

Connecting Equity to Research and Practice

The Wallace Foundation Report, *How Principals Affect Students and Schools*, frames the impact and effectiveness of principals and vice-principals based on different expertise and skills that are manifested through a set of leadership behaviours. When those skills are applied through an equity lens, they can have an important impact on students, staff and families from underserved communities and identities.

An Emerging Framework for Connecting Equity in Principal Leadership to Equitable Outcomes

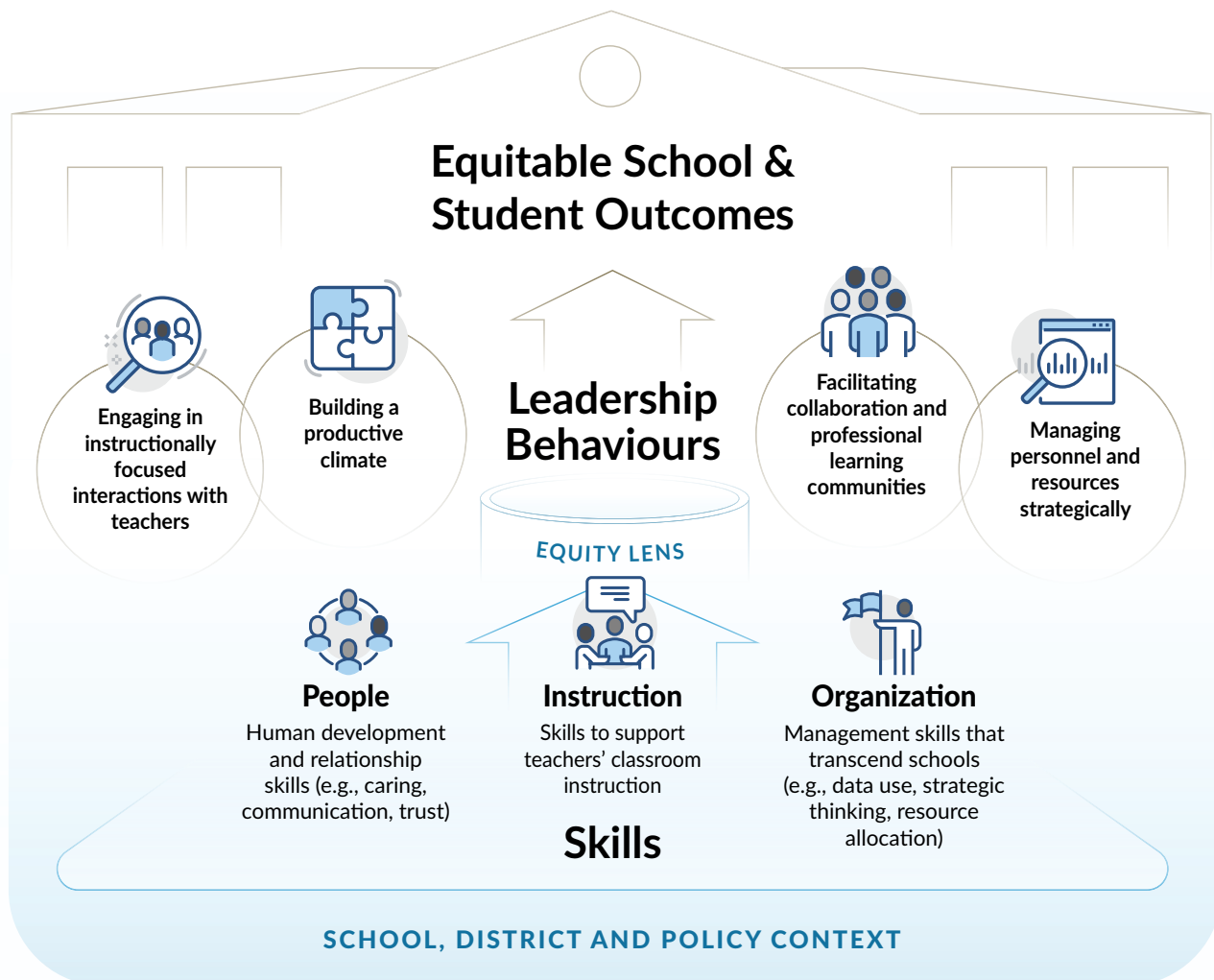


Image adapted by the Ontario Principals' Council from the Wallace Foundation Report, *How Principals Affect Students and Schools*

Skills



PEOPLE

Effective school leaders build strong relationships and collaborative cultures in their buildings and in the broader community. Equitable leaders must continually work to develop and refine their equity lens and apply it to their interactions with staff, students and families.



INSTRUCTION

Effective school leaders impact instruction in their schools by using feedback and coaching to have instructionally focused interactions with teachers. Centring these conversations on practices such as culturally responsive pedagogy can work to foster equitable environments in classrooms.



THE ORGANIZATION

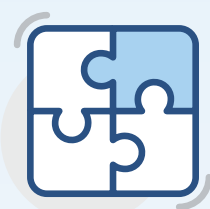
Effective school leaders are strategic and intentional in how they hire, place and retain effective teachers. Having an equity mindset helps foster a culture where teachers with diverse identities are supported and have equitable access to leadership roles.

Leadership Behaviours



INSTRUCTIONALLY FOCUSED INTERACTIONS

Equitable school leaders bring a critical lens to teacher observation and school data to drive the instructional program.



BUILDING PRODUCTIVE CLIMATES

Equitable school leaders foster a sense of safety, value and appreciation for teachers, students and other school staff with diverse identities.



FACILITATING COLLABORATION

Equitable school leaders establish professional learning on issues of race, equity and cultural responsiveness, providing time and support for PLCs and other collaborative opportunities for all school staff.



STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Equitable school leaders use data regarding teacher effectiveness to make decisions regarding teacher hiring and placement and align financial resources with equity goals.

Equitable school leaders must ...

- have the ability to impact equity concerns by monitoring their interactions with students, families and the broader school community, such as when looking at student discipline patterns
- create equitable school environments by engaging in intentional learning about race and racial issues, bringing a critical lens to analyzing school data and prioritizing the needs of their diverse student body
- consistently reflect on their own actions and how they are removing barriers or creating opportunities for underserved groups.

The Ontario Principals' Council is ...

- supporting Members through the integration of anti-oppressive practices into Professional Learning sessions and offerings
- using data from the Member Census to identify areas of growth and opportunity such as the creation of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Committee and subsequent sub-committees, and the creation of identity-based affinity groups.

LEADING



“Lost” STUDENTS

A retrospective from Simcoe Shores explores the value of educational outreach

By Laura Lee Millard-Smith

Every year, school boards report the number of students who have been “retired” from a school register before they have completed secondary school. Students who have been retired, or have been what is termed “lost” from their learning plan, commonly seek a revised plan, as the previous plan was not working for them. In such instances, a team of school staff comprised of administrators as well as guidance, student success, Special Education and attendance counsellors attempt to reach out and re-engage those identified lost learners prior to graduation. In practice, this would include reaching out by phone calls, emails and even generalized social media posts with invitations to return as a call to action.



Since the onset of the pandemic, the effect on a school's ability to retain learners has been significant. Some students face challenges related to accessing technology, others are confronted with family challenges related to financial well-being and some carry the weight of protecting elderly caregivers. Many expressed feeling adverse mental health effects related to isolation and uncertainty. In 2021, the Institute for 21st Century Questions [reported](#) that the number of students who have been lost to their education plan in Ontario is well over six per cent – or more than 120,000 students.

In the spring of 2011, *The Register* published *Educational Outreach: Reaching our Complex Needs students*, giving me the chance to open up about our experience leading an education outreach program, developed for students who were disengaged from public education. In 2013, the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) formed one secondary school, uniting alternative learning off-site programs across our county. I was fortunate enough to be asked to lead the new Simcoe Shores alternative school program – specifically dedicated to reaching students who have become “lost” to the mainstream high school system – and I have remained in this job for eight years now.

This progressive school has evolved and broadened its scope of practice over the years. Specifically, in the fall of 2018, a review of alternative programming in our board resulted in the addition of co-operative education, supervised alternative learning (SAL) and eLearning programming as opportunities for students.

From this journey, I have cultivated many insights and opportunities for connecting to lost students, and creating authentic educational plans for them. Work included navigating system practices that created barriers for learners, creating a communication network in a large county for potential learners and for teachers, and working with local communities toward a common goal of making education attainable for all learners. This journey has now become an expedition in post-pandemic operations, but the lessons gained were real and have value going forward.

Currently, Simcoe Shores has 11 remote campuses throughout the board and offers students face-to-face learning in smaller class settings, co-operative learning, SAL, asynchronous eLearning, School Within A College (SWAC) and Dual Credits (with a local college). Our student enrolment has grown from 330 students to over 600 over the past eight years. Shores' graduates have continued their learning in post-secondary pathways that include positions in apprenticeships, college programs (from social work to computer programming) and university programs.

There is a lot that has been learned and that can be shared in terms of application for growth and development of this al-

ternative school. It is worth noting that before we started this journey, there were no specific programs, written resources or podcasts that focused on school leadership and effective instruction for alternative and at-risk students. I leveraged my school leader mentors for advice, reviewing many teaching resources and developing a database to know our learners (staff) and clients (students). Inspiring staff through relationship-based and research-supported approaches or interventions was key in leading our school. I then created a plan, or “bucket list,” for the next five to 10 years. The pathway was not straight and included a list of “Why can't we?” items.

Set Up Your Bucket List

Simcoe Shores needed to be grounded in a purposeful student-focused culture that would guide professional development and maintain our focus in the coming years. Our successful “bucket list” included collaborative visioning and the development of belief statements with staff. Operational processes and site management would also be part of the list in establishing this unique school.

The bucket list plan for the coming years included

- navigating and improving the home-to-school transportation services policies for students
- creating safe, welcoming and caring spaces
- launching purposeful teaching strategies
- reaching out to communities and parent partners, and
- identifying a process to document success stories.

For instance, upgrading classrooms to valued spaces, as opposed to tired castaway spaces, required advocacy and persistence. The spaces we used needed attention and upgrades to resources, technology and system support personnel.

The development of a growth mindset for staff was an integral part of our continued work. Teachers learned together and moved from being resource-based teachers to learning coaches, leveraging [Universal Design for Learning](#), [Inquiry Based Learning](#), [Project Based Learning](#) and [John Hattie's Visible Learning](#). The establishment of processes for data collection and documentation of student successes was valuable in documenting our progress and moving us forward. Multiple measures of success were reviewed including attendance, credit accumulation, post-secondary pathways accessed and graduation rates.

As new information was collected from the community of learners and supporters, the plan and bucket list was altered and adapted.

Creating a Collective Movement

Creating a collective movement in the school was key to sustaining improved outcomes for students. Drawing from resources from letitripple.org and the [Via Institute on Character](http://ViaInstituteonCharacter.com), discussions began with staff to build school personality. Staff were called on to complete surveys identifying their character strength profile. Additionally, as their principal, I suggested strengths I saw in them. Following this, we created buttons with their identified strengths, which were then posted on the walls at every staff meeting and professional development day. The use of consistent, personal and positive conversations kept the team moving forward and focused on our shared goal.

Leading an alternative school is not the same as a traditional secondary school. The measures of success that are routinely evaluated are not valid as a result of changing population

Students who have been retired, or have been what is termed “LOST” from their learning plan, commonly seek a revised plan, as the previous plan was not working for them.

demographics. As principal, I crafted a five-year professional development plan focused specifically on developing teaching and learning practices for our unique student population, and professional learning communities were established to examine problems of practice.

We faced several challenges in moving alternative learning spaces to a welcoming place for learning. Each of the 11 campuses within the Simcoe Shores alternative school program is located off school board property. This adds the complexity of managing landlords and leases, ensuring sufficient custodial support and establishing lines of communication in a system designed for singular sites. Classroom improvements included moving six campuses to new locations over the course of seven years, along with a significant campus renovation. Advocating for improved technology access and Internet speed was a lengthy process, but resulted in equitable improvements for our students. Devices are now provided to classrooms for student learning, and our resources now align with those accessed at other secondary schools.

Our teaching staff saw the need to adapt curriculum and include new manipulatives, STEM activities and authentic learning experiences for these unique students. Learning for staff included expanding our understanding of how to support students who have experienced significant trauma. Certifications in [SafeTalk](http://SafeTalk.com), [Adults Working With Youth](http://AdultsWorkingWithYouth.com) and First Aid have all been part of the school learning plan.

As a school, a connection to the local community is important. In our case, we accomplished this without difficulty. Staff reached out to community agencies such as libraries, youth centres, YMCAs, career centres, senior associations and food banks. We brought community access to school with the help of social workers supporting individual student well-being, while individual campus locations



also created wellness activities related to student health and emotional well-being.

It is of utmost importance that the student voice is consistently sought and valued in the regular revisioning of the school. A board-led student survey in 2016 reported that the top three components in the school were the positive social connections with peers and

It is of utmost importance that the STUDENT VOICE is consistently sought and valued in the regular revisioning of the school.



teachers, and the welcoming feeling students get when they arrive each day. Students have shared their positive experiences with comments like “Teachers go more in depth with examples. They relate learning to real life, and we can learn about the world.”

Supervising and supporting remote teaching staff requires a functional process. Long before digital meetings were commonplace, we leveraged virtual meeting spaces using Adobe Connect, Google Meet and Zoom for consistent connections and conversations with staff. Many central board processes to review data require specific attention to ensure accuracy, and we faced barriers to accessing information not designed for this school model. Luckily, my previous teaching experience in business and data management, and my administrative connections within the board and IT development team, proved useful in effecting changes to data collection and reporting processes.

It Starts at the Shores

Our priority for the coming years is purposefully planning inclusive education in alternative programming. Simcoe Shores now includes a campus (7th Fire) dedicated to the education and support of Indigenous learners in the northern part of Simcoe County. Fifty per cent of the teaching staff at Simcoe Shores now have at least one qualification in Indigenous Studies. Providing evidence-based direction and increasing the teaching expertise to build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect remains a focus in the coming years.

Never before has trauma-informed teaching become more important. Simcoe Shores’ tag line, “It starts at the Shores,” initiates a distinctive experience when we say, “Welcome, we can help.” We believe students can achieve success despite the variety of barriers they may have faced. Purposeful conversations inform us about each student’s circumstance and are key in the engagement phase of bringing back our lost learners. Developing a re-engagement strategy in 2021–22 ensures flexibility for continuous enrolment, programs that address authentic student interests and purposeful staffing to reintroduce the value of relationships in learning and support.

While the continued outreach and communication to our lost learners may still come from phone calls, emails and social media posts, the greatest source of student referral and return has come from the students and families themselves. Students who have had positive experiences are returning with other friends. Recently, a student who previously attended Simcoe Shores left to return to a mainstream secondary school, stopped attending due to COVID-19, but then chose to return to Simcoe Shores to enhance their learning,



stating, “Simcoe Shores makes learning about MY needs, not the needs of teachers,” and that has “built my confidence.”

Over 10 years, I have been leading a school that creates a unique and safe place for students who were deemed “lost” or who required adaptable options for learning. There was a plan, a bucket list and a collective movement that turned into an expedition that has had unpredictable challenges and circumstances

encountered through a worldwide pandemic, but that has provided learning applications for all school leaders, and one that will enable re-engagement post-pandemic. ▲

Laura Lee Millard-Smith is a principal with Simcoe County DSB whose leadership work has included revising the learning opportunities for disengaged youth. [@LL_Msmith](#)
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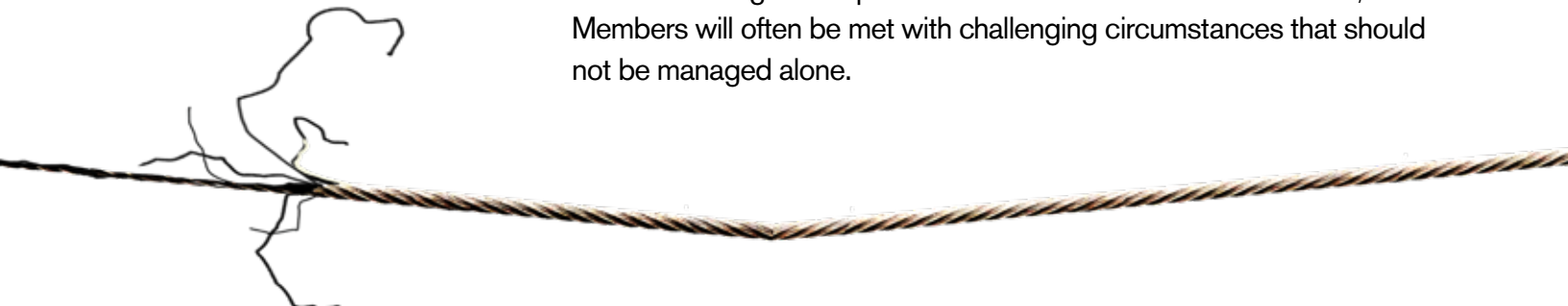
YOU

DIG

Best practices and
getting back to basics

By the Protective Services Team
Illustration by Anthony Tremaglia

Principals and vice-principals in Ontario are accountable to numerous stakeholders. Your decisions and actions are subject to various laws, board policies and procedures. As such, the implications of even the slightest misstep in judgment, or in the performance of your duties, can be daunting. Whether navigating the complexities of leading a school or facing the responsibilities of a central administrator role, our Members will often be met with challenging circumstances that should not be managed alone.



The OPC Protective Services Team (PST) encourages all Members to seek consultation, advice and support as early and as often as necessary. When you call at the earliest possible stage of becoming aware of an impending challenge, PST involvement can make most situations far more manageable. The opposite also tends to be true. Members can find themselves facing a professional or legal employment-related problem with potentially serious consequences that could have been significantly mitigated, or even avoided altogether, if they had called for advice and assistance from PST at an early stage.

This article aims to emphasize the importance of the mantra, “Call before you dig.” You would not begin to make significant landscaping renovations to your home or property before calling the municipality to determine the exact location of gas lines. Similarly, we advise you to “call before you dig” when navi-

gating the landscape of employment-related professional or legal challenges.

Our team is comprised of four consultants and three lawyers. The consultants are former principals (elementary and secondary) who are trained and experienced in a variety of professional and legal aspects of the principal/vice-principal role. The lawyers have experience in all aspects of law that pertain to the role of the administrator, and for which our Members may require advice and advocacy.

Any Member in good standing is eligible to receive protective services support in accordance with the Protective Services Policy, as part of your membership fee. We recommend you call the PST whenever you need confidential professional advice, counselling, support, advocacy or legal protection. To access these services, the issues for which you are seeking PST support must be related to your employment duties.

The first step when you call is to speak with one of our Intake Consultants. They will provide advice and direction during the first call that will, in most cases, be sufficient to satisfy a query or help to resolve the concern. If, based on their professional discretion, the matter requires ongoing support and intervention, they may refer you to a Protective Services Consultant. This consultant will manage your case from start to finish, with the length of support dependent on the nature of the issue.

Should the consultant determine that you require legal advice and/or representation, an OPC Legal Counsel will be available to advise the consultant and, where warranted, directly assist you by providing legal advice and representation. In some cases, this lawyer may be unable to provide legal assistance to you due to an ethics wall, or because more specific external expertise is required. In

such unique circumstances, an external lawyer may be retained, but your OPC Counsel will continue to monitor the file.

In circumstances where two or more Members have a conflict of interest – for example, a principal vs. a vice-principal – each will receive assistance from a separate consultant, and if necessary, they will be referred to separate OPC or external lawyers. In such cases, only the consultant and/or lawyer responsible for a particular Member will have access to their respective Member’s file. PST personnel who are supporting Members in a conflict of interest do not discuss any aspect of the matter with each other.

There are many reasons one might call our Protective Services Team. The most common reasons are

- investigations by your employer school board of alleged culpable behaviour
- investigations related to a workplace harassment or human rights complaint
- notice of a complaint filed against you at the Ontario College of Teachers
- conflicts arising with parents of students in your school and
- claims for Long-Term Disability (LTD) Insurance or Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage.

What follows is a summary of what you can expect when facing each of these types of challenges, and the PST’s advice in responding to them.

Investigations of Alleged Culpable Behaviour

Learning that your employer wishes to meet with you about a complaint or set of allegations brought to their attention can be unsettling, to say the least. If you find yourself involved in an “Opportunity to Respond (OTR)” meeting or workplace investigation as a Respondent, the following is a list of helpful tips to keep in mind when participating in your response interview(s). Our team is available to help and support you through

all aspects of the investigation. As soon as you become aware of a complaint or allegations of misconduct or performance concerns, please contact the PST.

- Always **comply with the rules** of the process (such as rules around reprisal and not speaking to anyone about the investigation).
- **Review** any allegations, complaints or evidence given to you in advance of the interview (advance notice may not always be provided, depending on the nature of the investigation).
- **Remain focused** on factual information – what you know, what you observed, what you heard.
- Make sure you **understand** the questions.
- Answer the questions as **clearly and succinctly** as possible.
- **Understand the difference** between “I don’t remember/I can’t recall” and “That did not happen.”
- Consider what **corroborating evidence** may support your version of events.
- **Stay calm.** Losing your cool will undermine your credibility. If necessary, take a break, breathe deeply and regain your composure.
- **Raise any questions or concerns** about the process with your PST consultant, to consider whether to raise it with the investigator before or during the interview.

Workplace Harassment and Board Human Rights Complaints

Employers conduct workplace investigations for a variety of allegations. They most commonly investigate workplace harassment and human rights allegations in accordance with their obligations under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and the [Human Rights Code](#). Of all the possible complaints you could face, learning that someone has alleged you harassed or discriminated against them based on a protected ground under the [Human Rights Code](#) can be the most upsetting. Fear or worry about the unknown, upset with

potential reputational damage and, at times, being assigned to the home with pay pending the outcome are all very real, trauma-inducing elements of any investigation process.

As workplace investigations are often the basis on which employers take corrective or disciplinary action, it is crucial that they are conducted in a timely and fair manner, and in accordance with the employers’ policies and procedures. Employers have an obligation to take all complaints seriously and ensure that all investigations are conducted as confidentially as possible. Some boards have a procedure that requires them to conduct a preliminary threshold assessment, prior to conducting a full investigation. This is to





Whether navigating the complexities of leading a school or facing the responsibilities of a central administrator role, our Members will often be met with challenging circumstances that should not be managed alone.

determine whether the complaint falls under the employer's procedure and, if so, whether the complaint would be a violation of the employer's policy.

Once the investigation process ensues, a PST consultant can support you by being present during the interview, answering your questions and raising concerns with the investigator where necessary. The investigator will take notes during the meeting or record the interview. Your consultant will also take notes that are stored in a highly protected and confidential legal database for future reference where required.

A board investigation seeks to determine if, on a balance of probabilities, a board policy or procedure has been violated, or if there has been another form of misconduct. The investigator will determine if the burden of proof has been met for each individual allegation, considering the evidence and the credibility of the witnesses. The investigator will usually draft a report that summarizes the evidence that was collected, outline the findings of fact and state their conclusions. If the investigator determines that the threshold has been met and there has been misconduct, the board may impose discipline or other corrective action on the Respondent. The discipline should be proportionate to the misconduct and based on principles of progressive discipline.

College of Teachers Complaints

Should you become the subject of a complaint at the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), contact us immediately. Don't respond to the College without first speaking to the PST. Since the OCT is a judicial and regulatory body, your case will be referred directly to a lawyer. Not all complaints to the College proceed to an investigation. If, however, the College proceeds with an investigation, we will work with you to prepare a response.

Most complaints against administrators are resolved at the investigation stage. From the

investigation, the concern may be referred to either the Discipline or the Fitness to Practise Committee for a hearing. The committee will decide if the Member is guilty of professional misconduct or incompetence, or is unfit to carry out their professional responsibilities. However, many cases that are referred to these committees are resolved by agreement. All Discipline Committee decisions must be published and are available on the College's website. The details of these decisions are kept confidential, with the exception of any terms, conditions or limitations placed on the individual's teaching certificate.

Conflicts with Parents

A significant and noticeable change to the principal/vice-principal role has been in managing expectations from parents who are now more knowledgeable about, and involved in, their child's education. Having parents who are informed, involved and capable of supporting their child's education is a positive development, and this should be encouraged.

However, difficulties may arise for school leaders when a relationship with a parent breaks down and trust is lost. Once the relationship with a parent has been damaged, it can become difficult to repair. There are many ways to establish positive relationships, including a variety of proactive strategies that a principal/vice-principal can implement to engage parents. If a conflict does arise, it is important that the administrator separate emotions from the situation at hand and seek to understand the reasons for the parent's actions, in order to be able to respond effectively.

Long-Term Disability Claims

Some boards require participation in a Long-Term Disability (LTD) Insurance Plan as a condition of employment. With other boards, Members can elect to participate in this benefit. Being off work and having to claim LTD

benefits can be a challenging experience. Be sure to make use of the resources noted by your insurer to help you cope and recover. Once disability benefits are approved, there are responsibilities for you, your medical team and the insurer. Finding ways to cope with your recovery can alleviate much of the stress, and the more you manage, the more you will feel in control and be able to return to work faster.

We encourage you to enrol in the [Starling Minds program](#), a cognitive behaviour therapy-based online program to help manage stress, identify triggers and develop coping skills. As an OPC Member, you and your family can access the program as part of your membership fee. You can also access additional resources provided by our insurer, Canada Life (formerly Great-West Life), through the [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#) website. If you are enrolled in the OPC Benefits plan (for life insurance or LTD), you may also access additional supports through Best Doctors.

Remember – You Are Not Alone

Never have Ontario principals/vice-principals felt such levels of exposure, vulnerability and genuine concern for their employment and well-being. We can't totally prevent challenges – employment, legal or health-related – from arising. However, if challenges do arise, together we can ensure an informed, measured and strategic response that can mitigate or even prevent serious employment implications.

Know that you are not alone. Surround yourself with trusted, experienced colleagues who can support you. Access additional support through available resources, including your board's Employee and Family Assistance Program, as needed. Engage in professional learning when the opportunities present themselves. Familiarize yourself with relevant legislation, board policies and the collective bargaining agreements represented in your school. As a best practice, always remember to call the PST for consultation, advice and support. ▲

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PRINCIPALS & TEACHERS



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• TEL: 416-763-4121 • FAX: 416-763-5225 • jobs@glcstschool.com

Mark Your Calendar

February

28

Principal's Qualification Program (PQP) – Online
Spring 2022 Part 1 or 2
Application deadline: February 21

March

3

Book Club – *Stretching Your Learning Edges: Growing (up) at work*

4

Emerging Leader Development Program (ELDP), TDSB – Online
Module 3 – Exploring Your Equity Stance
Application deadline: February 25

8

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Webinar Series

Webinar 3 – What About Student Voice: How do we incorporate the identities and lived experiences of students with ASD?

21

Education Law AQ (ELQP) – Online
March 21 to May 31
Application deadline: March 7

25

Emerging Leader Development Program (ELDP)
Module 8 – Growing Your Personal Leadership Resources (PLRs)
Application deadline: March 18

Emerging Leader Development Program (ELDP), TDSB – Online
Module 4 – What is Instructional Leadership?
Application deadline: March 18

26

Principals' Development Course (PDC) – Online
• Module 12 – Supporting Leadership in Mathematics
• Module 18 – Anti-Oppressive School Improvement
March 26 to April 19
Application deadline: March 12

April

2

Mentoring Qualification Program (MQP)
Application deadline: March 19

30

Principal's Development Course (PDC) – Online
• Module 8 – Leading the Kindergarten Program
• Module 14 – Leading the French Immersion School
April 30 to June 4
Application deadline: April 16

August

One-Day Conference on Equity

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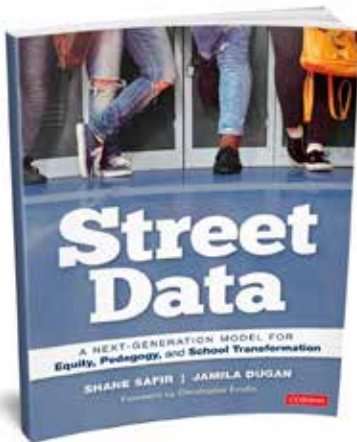
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Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education





Street Data: A next-generation model for equity, pedagogy, and school transformation

By Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan
Corwin Press
ISBN 978-1-07181-271-6

“Street Data is about radical new beginnings and having the sense of self and purpose to detach from a broken model and embark on building a new one.” – Christopher Emdin

Street Data is a book that seeks to challenge our deepest beliefs about education and work, and to address the many ways our systems continue to leave some students and families behind. It is a way to centre those who are underserved in the decision-making processes of schooling, and to stand against oppressive practices. Authors Safir and Dugan create a framework for change – an action plan for dismantling systemic racism and resisting the structures that marginalize.

The book opens with a quote from Audre Lorde: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” At the core of this paradigm is the movement from a hierarchical structure that centres the white male body to a circular structure that values the special and unique gifts of each individual, and nurtures those gifts to create spaces that are rich with difference, skill, care and mentorship.

Divided into four sections, the book addresses the “why” of street data,

“how” to choose students and voices at the margins and identify root causes of inequitable outcomes through deep listening, and “how” to deepen learning through equity work, intense focus and listening to educators.

The Equity Transformation Cycle, while similar to design thinking process, includes important reimagining of the structures that we take for granted and that are invisible to many of us, but that exist as barriers to success for some of our students. The authors set out a framework for cultural transformation through a core stance of readiness, action and gentle reminders that what we measure isn’t always valuable. *Street Data* provides a road map to challenging the type of information we collect to make important decisions in schools about students and their learning. It is a way to contextualize data, and to make sure that data is personal and about the students in front of us.

As a school leader myself, I am using this text to gather new informa-

tion about students and families to create living school improvement goals that closely mirror that feedback. The development and encouragement of collective teacher efficacy is core to the development of agency in students, and I am using professional development time to explore some of the ideas proposed in the book about data collection, student learning, collaboration and reframing behaviours.

This book provides many thought-provoking ways to rethink the way we educate students. The social justice teaching framework, empathy interviews and a graduate profile are all ways to deepen our understanding of students and families, and to create schools that make fiscal, instructional and assessment decisions based on real-time, evidence-based data. The best part? It can be the “how” we have been looking for to engage with the equity and anti-oppression goals of our boards and of society at large. ▲

Nicole Miller is a principal with the Toronto DSB and a doctoral student at OISE.

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Building an Anti-oppressive Organizational Culture

If the canary stops chirping...

Raised in the United States, I've often been asked, "Can you tell that 'we' [Canadians] are not as bad when it comes to racism?" My response is: "Even a single drop of used motor oil can contaminate a million drops of water."

I believe that having fewer incidents of racism than the United States does not absolve Canada from making a commitment to anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices in the fields of education, health care and law. It is important that we analyze what our commitments are.

As the new human rights and equity (HR&E) lead administrator for the Avon Maitland District School Board, I'm committed to ensuring that equity, and anti-racist and anti-oppressive education and inclusivity, permeate all aspects of our district's practices, procedures and policies. One of my roles will be to lead the full and ongoing implementation of the responsive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2021–24 and the Ontario Equity Education Action Plan. Guiding the strategic plan goals for our "I am Well, I am Engaged, I am Prepared" plan will, I hope, be instrumental in building an anti-oppressive organizational culture.

Our focus will be to dismantle systemic barriers to student achievement and engagement informed by human rights discourse and learning, accomplished through trenchant analysis of current policies and procedures.

During my schooling in the United States, I graduated in a de facto all-Black senior class after attending desegregated schools through the "bussing program" in Durham, NC. I then earned a bachelor's degree in History from Davidson College, then a teaching licence and a master's degree.

After my educational career as an economics, legal, politics and history teacher for Durham and Orange counties, I went on to become an assistant principal in Wake, Durham and Orange counties.

Then, in a bold move, my family and I relocated to southwestern Ontario in August 2014 to join the Avon Maitland

DSB administrative team, and I later became the HR&E lead administrator.

I like to use the analogy of a canary in a coal mine when describing the purpose of HR&E lead administrator. If the canary stops chirping, it means the environment for the miners has attained a fatal level of toxic fumes with prolonged exposure. The function of the HR&E lead administrator is the same. When warnings are issued, the worst thing would be to ignore them and continue with business as usual. If that is allowed to happen, a complex situation will quickly become "problematic."

I have found that our students, parents and community members have not only had enough, but they are watching closely and becoming more vocal. Our responsibility as leaders is to require that all are committed to ensuring equity, diversity and inclusivity in all areas of the board. When asked if I have hope, I reply that, yes, for that I do have hope. ▲

Jason H. Burt (Burt, he/him) is the Human Rights and Equity Lead Administrator with the Avon Maitland DSB. [@jason_burt5](https://twitter.com/jason_burt5)

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