

The Register

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



Supporting 2SLGBTQQIA+ Students

Concrete steps for what you can do

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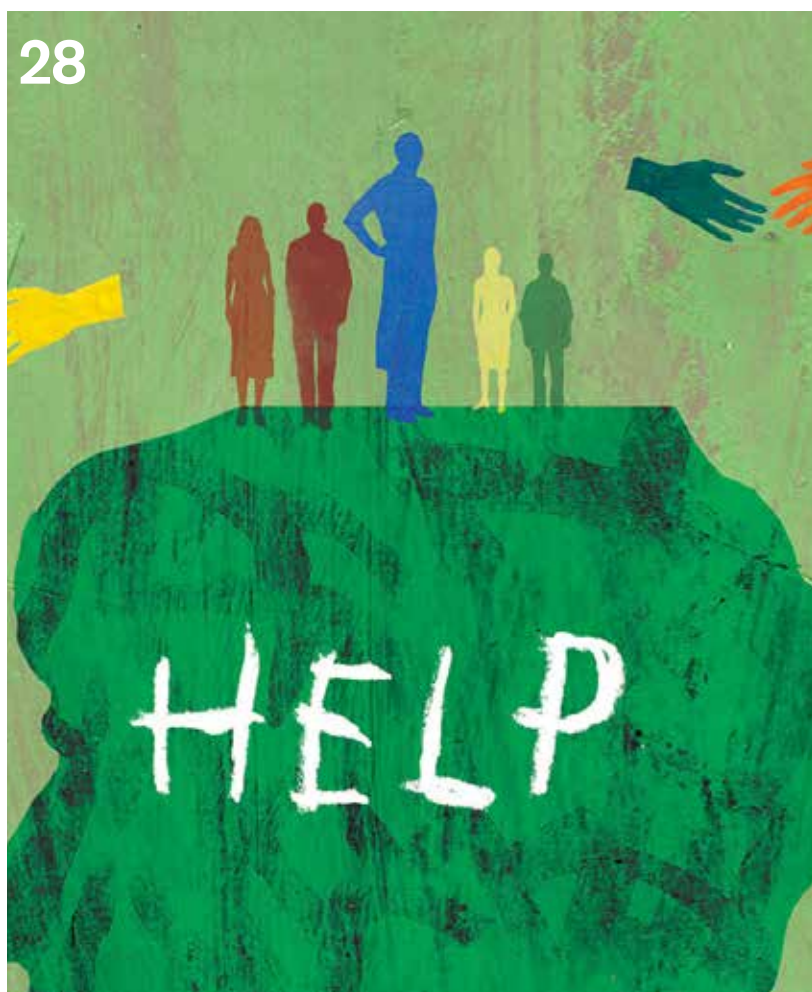


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Many staff lack information and/or confidence to help students



Cover Illustration by MoeButterfly Art

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OPC's Silver Anniversary

Building on the successes of our predecessors



In 2023, the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) will mark our 25th anniversary, along with our partner associations the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO) and l'Association des directions et des directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO), all of whom came into existence in 1998. When

reflecting on our origins, it is interesting to note that if you believe in symbolism, the odds were not in our favour. We came into existence on April Fools' Day that year, when the highest-grossing film was *Titanic* and *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* was topping the music charts. Yet even with this trifecta as the backdrop to our inception, we persevered and have become a well-respected, highly efficient and extremely effective organization, representing more than 6,000 principals and vice-principals across the province.

Our Members and leadership have been an important factor in making

the Ontario education system one of the best in the world. A [2021 study](#) by the Wallace Foundation emphasized what we have always known, that “an effective principal’s impact is stronger and broader than previously thought, making it ‘difficult to envision’ a higher return on investment in K-12 education than the cultivation of high-quality school leadership.”

Building the strong foundation of the OPC has not been without its challenges, but with a strong, committed team of practising school leaders, staff and lawyers, who have always ensured that students were at the heart of every decision, we find ourselves cele-

brating our silver anniversary. We have had three outstanding executive directors: Mike Benson, Ian McFarlane and Allyson Otten, each one building on the successes of their predecessors and each with a unique and timely vision to move the organization forward.

As we launch into the next chapter, we do so with a new executive director, Dr. Nadine Trépanier-Bisson. Based on her work as the OPC’s director of professional learning, we know Nadine will be as outstanding as her predecessors. Our Provincial Councillors, representing each of the school districts across the province, along with the Provincial Executive elected from the Council, have also been instrumental in building a strong organization. Their contributions, knowledge, guidance and leadership has been constructive and beneficial.

While we cannot predict what the next 25 years will bring, we can reflect on the growth of the organization during the first 25 years of existence, and celebrate the successes that have sustained and improved conditions for school leaders. We have seen our ability to negotiate grow and improve; our advocacy and lobbying has informed and reformed; our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion continues to grow under the leadership of our first EDI director; and the role of principals and vice-principals is respected and recognized for its impact on schools and on student success. The OPC is a unique organization that is

respected across the province, the country and around the world.

What we envisage over the next 25 years is continued growth and change. The role of the principal and vice-principal has evolved during the past quarter-century and will continue to transform over the coming years. Having the OPC to guide us makes the future exciting and enticing, as we continue to strive for improvement and to do better together. The African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together," reflects the path we have taken together for the past two and a half decades.

Watch [our website](#), President's Messages and social media platforms for details about the various celebrations planned throughout the coming year. ▲



Patsy Agard

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SUBMISSIONS & IDEAS

Would you like to contribute to *The Register*?
Do you have an article, feedback or ideas?

Our editorial team would like to hear from you.

Deadlines for submissions are listed below.

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

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

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

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

The Register is the proud recipient of the following awards:



Happenings at the OPC ...



In October, the OPC held its 23rd Annual Awards Dinner. Six Difference Makers were honoured for going above and beyond through their work on behalf of students. (L-R) Heather Hight of Limestone, Pamela Marshall-Gray of Near North, Heather McMaster of Hastings and Prince Edward, Shawnda Norlock of Keewatin-Patricia, Mark Ozorio of Bluewater and Deanna Pacheco of Keewatin-Patricia.



Left: Our Honorary Life Membership award was given to our Past-President Lisa Collins from Near North DSB.

Middle: Judith Desjardins (L) and Theresa Kennedy (R) of Student Mental Health Ontario accept the Outstanding Contribution to Education award for its contribution to students, schools and families throughout Ontario.

Right: Retiring Executive Director Allyson Otten receives an Honorary Life Membership award for over 25 years of service to the OPC.



Many of our Honorary Life Members joined us at our Awards Dinner.



Future-ready Education

Rethinking our education system

Have you ever stopped to think about how our education system is shaped? Who does it serve? How has it changed in the past 100 years?

For several years, shortly before the pandemic began, academics and policy-makers across the world have been asking the question, “What does future-ready education look like?” Many have written about the need for change. In developed countries, that need is driven by antiquated education systems that have neglected, and in some cases harmed, students for decades. Our current education systems fall short of meeting the needs of students today and tomorrow.

The pandemic highlighted important inequities in education systems worldwide and forced us to make changes. Are these changes lasting? Are they sustainable? Which changes actually put all students first? What further changes are needed to ensure our education system reflects the needs

of current and future students? How do we define success in school, and how do we support each student in achieving this newly defined success?

As a result of research and broad-based consultations, some countries, such as Singapore, have embarked upon a long-term reform of their education system, putting students and their needs at the centre of the new design. In Scotland, education stakeholders are currently engaged in a massive consultation informed by research that will lead to a report and deep reforms of the education system to better serve students. What about Canada and Ontario? What are we doing?

There are some individuals who are working either together or individually to gather data that is meant to inform education transformation. However, we at the OPC believe we need to go further. We need to find a way to engage a diverse group of individuals with a vested interest in education in a conversation that will inform future-ready education in

Canada, and specifically for us in Ontario. That is why the OPC has decided to put on a [Summit on Public Education in Canada](#).

On April 3 and 4, we will host the Summit in Toronto, at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. We hope to welcome at least 400 delegates who want to be part of a conversation to inform future-ready education in Canada, taking into account provincial and territorial contexts. Individuals from across Canada will be invited to take part in this one-of-a-kind event: students (K-12 and post-secondary), parents, Indigenous community members and leaders, community leaders, parents, school and system staff (including teachers and principals) and business leaders. We invite you to join us for the Summit and to watch for the summary paper that will be prepared following it. For more information, you can consult our [website](#). ▲

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THE *new* SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

Calling in instead of
calling out

By Peggy Sweeney



Fireside Chat with OPC President Patsy Agard (L), Loretta Ross (C) and OPC President-Elect Ralph Nigro (R) at the Leading Forward Together Conference in August 2022.

ICE



Loretta Ross is a professor at Smith College in Northampton, MA, in the Program for the Study of Women and Gender. She teaches courses on white supremacy, human rights and “calling in” the “calling out” culture. She has taught at Hampshire College and Arizona State University, and holds honorary Doctorate of Civil Law degrees from Arcadia University and Smith College. Loretta has written three books and dozens of articles, and has received numerous awards for her work over 50 years in social justice activism.

That activism began when she was a teenager, working on anti-apartheid and anti-gentrification issues in Washington, DC. She became involved in the social justice movement, served as the national co-director of the 2004 March for Women’s Lives, founded the National Center for Human Rights Education, launched the Women of Color Program, and was the program director of the National Black Women’s Health Project. Loretta was one of the first African American women to direct a rape crisis centre, pioneering work on violence against women. She was the national coordinator of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective and co-created the Theory of Reproductive Justice.

PHOTO: OPC



After many years working in the field of social justice, she learned about a new phenomenon several years ago, when she first started using Facebook. “My grandson told me if I wanted to communicate with him, the best way was through Facebook. So I went to the site and started looking around. And I was shocked by what I saw.

“I observed how unbelievably mean people were being to each other. They were saying things online that I’m sure they wouldn’t say in person. So I asked a young woman with whom I worked what this was all about. She told me it was the call-out culture and it was what people did on social media.

“This was normal? There was a name for it? I was shocked. So I asked her what people were doing about it. She just shrugged and said it was inevitable. But it didn’t feel inevitable to me. I had been a social justice activist for 50 years, and this was not social justice.”

Loretta calls herself “a student of fascism. I study it, I work against it, I fight against it.” In the 1990s, she headed a research department at the National Anti-Klan Network that monitored hate groups. Part of her job was to deprogram people who had been in such groups. “I found myself having the most improbable conversations with the most unlikely people, definitely people I would not bring home to dinner.”

Her boss at the time, Reverend C. T. Vivian, was an icon in the civil rights movement. “One of the most important lessons he taught me was that if you are going to ask people to give up hate, then you need to be there for them when they do. The first time he told me that, I muttered under my breath, because it was not a sentiment

I shared. If the Klan hated me, I was all right hating them back.

“But I found that as I got to know them, I couldn’t hate them. I found I had to call myself in, in order not to call them out. I had to hold myself accountable to who I wanted to be, not who they expected me to be. They expected a Black woman to hate them right back. But Reverend Vivian taught me that was not worthy of my dignity, nor of the movement that we served. So when the young woman said they didn’t know what to do about the call-out culture, I said I have an idea about that, that I learned in my previous work.”

Loretta developed what she calls the “Five Cs Continuum” for how people can respond to words or actions that upset or offend them. “It’s my analysis of the call-out culture. It is seeking to hold people accountable for something that they’ve done that you think is wrong, whether it’s what they thought, what they said or how they looked.”

The first C is **calling them out**. “To me, the problem with the call-out culture is the way you choose to hold others accountable. It is usually done with anger, blaming and shaming. I think there is a better way.”

The ultimate call-out is the second C: **cancelling people**. “This is where you not only want to hold them accountable, but you want them to suffer for whatever they did – lose a job; lose their education; exile, punish or shun them. It’s more like a revenge tactic.”

The third C is **calling them in**. “It is really a call-out, but done with love and respect, instead of anger, blaming and shaming. I believe you can hold people accountable with how you talk to them,

allowing them to have a different opinion than you, which is their right, and be willing to invite them into a conversation instead of a fight. It's not about changing your mind or changing their mind. The goal is to have a conversation while respecting their human rights, just as you want and expect them to respect your human rights."

Loretta considers the fourth C – **calling on** – to be an intermediate step. "Calling people in or out requires an investment of your time and energy. Sometimes you aren't feeling that. You want to figure out what you're feeling first, so you don't squander your time on people who aren't worthy. Calling on is defined as requiring people to do the work to lean into their growth mindset instead of their fixed mindset. We want to call on them to do better, without us taking any responsibility for them doing the work."

She uses an example from her own life to illustrate this. "I have an uncle who becomes very vocal and agitated at family gatherings. He often uses racist language. I used to fight with him all the time. One year, I decided to change my strategy. I said, 'I know you're a good man, and that you would help someone even if they were Black, gay or an immigrant. So who am I dealing with here? Are you the good Uncle Frank who would help anyone? Or are you the bad Uncle Frank who uses racist language? How can I reconcile what you said with who I know you are?'"

"That's calling on. I'm not calling him in or out. I'm calling on him to tell his niece who he is. And when I took that approach, it stopped him right there, because he didn't have an easy answer. It also modelled for the rest of my family how you hold someone saying something racist accountable, without throwing them under the dinner table or exiling them from the family.

"Calling on is a very useful strategy, especially if you know them, because you can say you know that their interior goodness does not match their exterior problematic behaviours."

But even Loretta recognizes that sometimes no strategy works. "The fifth C is **calling it off**. We have no obligation to participate in unproductive conversations with people who are arguing just to be contrary, who aren't operating in good faith, don't care how they lie and aren't particularly attached to reality. Whether in-person or online, you get to choose how you spend your time and attention. Sometimes we can't find the magic words that will actually change other people. People don't change because of what someone else says. They change because something in them wants to change. You can urge them, you can support them, but you can't make them do so."

Loretta believes all five of the Cs along her continuum have their proper moments and uses. In her view, though, toxic uses of calling out and cancelling are epidemic, while too few people have the inner calm and courage to use her favourite tactic: calling in people "with respect and love."

Loretta acknowledges that it's not just some people who are participating in the calling out culture. "As a human rights activist, I care more about the calling out culture on the left, because calling people out is what we do as a human rights movement. We criticize

governments, individuals and corporations that violate people's human rights. What young people may not understand about the human rights movement is that calling out is our tactic of last resort, not our tactic of first resort.

"People try to circumvent the process and go right to the call-out, like that is the way you do social justice work or human rights work. But that's wrong. Perversely, calling someone out thwarts that goal, because it is human nature to defend ourselves and stand up for ourselves. No one will be accountable to someone who made them feel bad.

"On the right, I see the cynical nature of their calling out. They try to claim that all the racist, homophobic, transphobic things they want to say, they should have permission to say, without someone seeking to hold them accountable for it. They think that is just free speech. It's not.

"I've also heard many people say that both sides are doing it, so both sides are wrong. But one of the reasons I am impatient with this both-sides debate is that it is a false equivalence, that both the left and the right pose equal dangers to democracy. In my view, that's not the case. The left may want to debate you, but the right wants to eliminate you. I think that matters."

Loretta expresses great concern about the effect the call-out culture has had – and continues to have – on the school environment. "The call-out culture is rampant in all educational settings. We are particularly vulnerable in the U.S. because the whole educational project is under attack by the right. We're seeing book bannings, the firing of teachers, defunding of public education, attacks on liberal schools and critics of critical race theory [CRT]."

She is currently teaching a class at Smith College called White Supremacy in the Age of Trump. It is now a requirement for every student to graduate. "While most of the education system is running away from CRT, we're making it a graduation requirement. It's so important because there is still so much calling out that is

**People don't change
because of what
someone else says.
They change because
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**wants to
change.**





Loretta Ross during her TED Talk on Calling in at TEDMonterey in August 2021.


taking place in school environments. A lot of times students call out things they think are unfair because they have a well-honed sense of fairness – which is a good thing. Quite often the only microphone they have is social media. They don't have access to the trustees, board of directors, school board or other levers of power. They want to speak out and express their injustice.

“When I get called in to schools dealing with these controversies, I try to teach the adults to see this student engagement not as a problem, but as an opportunity. You can hire a half-million dollar consultant to tell you the same things that your students are offering you for free, if you learn not to be afraid of the information. Your students are your immediate focus group, telling you what is going on. A large part of dealing with calling out in the school culture is learning not to be afraid of our students, just because they are using the only microphone they have.”

Loretta is not naive enough to think that everyone will heed the advice of moving from a call-out to a call-in culture. But she thinks it is worth the effort to try. “I've been doing this work for a long time. Sometimes it takes years or decades to really see change. But if you're doing the right thing, then it's worth the time.” ▲

Find out more about Loretta, her courses, podcast, blog and publications at lorettajross.com.

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Meet Nadine!

On December 6, 2022, [Dr. Nadine Trépanier-Bisson](#) became the OPC's executive director. Here's a brief introduction for you.

Early Days

Nadine was born in Germany, moved to Quebec when she was two and moved to Ottawa when she was 14.

Schooling

She attended elementary school in Quebec, finished high school in Ottawa and attended the University of Ottawa. She has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, a Bachelor's degree in Education, a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and an EdD in Education Leadership. She also has an Executive Certificate in Alternate Dispute Resolution.

Why Education

"Ever since I was young, I wanted to be a teacher. As a kid, I had my dolls set up in the basement in front of a chalkboard. I made my sister sit in on 'lessons.' In my last year of high school, I was told I was too young to be a secondary teacher, so I pursued psychology. But in the last year of my

psychology degree, I knew that was not what I wanted to do. So I went to Teacher's College."

Education Work

Nadine spent nine years as a teacher and seven years as a principal, including two as a system principal in the area of supporting the implementation of professional learning communities (K–12).

Other Education Work

For eight years, Nadine was the executive director of the Association des directions et des directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO), the provincial francophone association for principals and vice-principals.

Move to the OPC

In 2019, Nadine was ready for a new challenge. She wanted to pursue opportunities that were not available in a much smaller organization, and be-

came the director of professional learning at the OPC.

Goals as Executive Director

"Twenty-five years in, we have to look at how we are responding to Members, as the role of P/VP has changed so much. Our structure has evolved. I expect there are things we are doing really well, and others that we could be doing better. We need to transform as an association to continue to meet Member needs with a continued commitment to anti-oppression, anti-colonialism and wellness. I also want to expand my working relationship with other stakeholders, as those relationships will help us to advance and advocate for P/VPs."

Family Life

Nadine is married and has a 23-year-old daughter and a 21-year-old son.

Interests/Hobbies

Nadine loves to read, both personal and professional books, tries to get to the gym or run every day and loves to cook. ▲



“

If I didn't define myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive.”

AUDRE LORDE

Supporting 2SLGBTQQIA Students

Concrete steps for what you can do

By Michelle Corneau

Illustration by MoeButterfly Art

I want to start this article by locating myself. I am Indigenous and a member of the Queer community. I'm also a vice-principal with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. I place the “2S” first in the acronym we now commonly use for the 2SLGBTQQIA+ (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual) community thanks to teachings from two-spirit Elder Lorraine Blu Waters, who articulates the ways in which the process of colonization disrupted First Nation, Métis and Inuit ways of knowing and being, including ideas around gender identity.



“

**It is not our differences
that divide us. It is our
inability to recognize,
accept and celebrate those
differences.”**

AUDRE LORDE



Residential schools enforced the Western binary of male and female. The term “two-spirit” was coined in 1990 at an Indigenous gathering in Winnipeg to reject this binary, and to reaffirm the ideas of gender fluidity that predate colonization. Just as the land acknowledgement has become commonplace to recognize the original inhabitants of North America, also known as Turtle Island, so the “2S” begins the acronym to do the same.

We all know that schools are microcosms of society, and right now signs indicate that things may get worse before they get better for the Queer community. For example, the Supreme Court of the United States’ overturn of *Roe vs Wade*, a 49-year-old precedent that secured the right to an abortion, does not bode well for trans rights. Both trans and abortion rights ultimately come down to the same principle: autonomy over one’s own body. Last year, Florida adopted the Parental Rights in Education bill, nicknamed the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, which strengthens censorship in classrooms and prohibits students in grades K–3 from learning about or discussing gender identity and sexual orientation, and prohibits discussion of 2SLGBTQQA+ identities, histories and realities for all grades if determined “age inappropriate.” The effects remain to be seen, but the bill echoes the 1988 Section 28 bill in the United Kingdom that left teachers believing “they would lose their jobs if they gave advice and support to LGBTQ+ students, or challenged homophobic language and bullying. LGBTQ+ teachers were left in fear, believing that their identity alone was grounds for dismissal from their job” (Lee 2022).

Currently 70 countries have laws that criminalize homosexuality, and in 2021, for example, two transgender Cameroonians were sentenced to five years in prison after being found guilty of “attempted homosexuality” (BBC News 2021). As another example, Russian President Vladimir Putin has implemented sanctions against Reverend Brent Hawkins, a member of the Queer community who, in 2001, officiated at the first two same-sex marriage ceremonies in Canada.

Rainbow Railroad, a global, not-for-profit organization that helps Queer people facing discrimination and displacement due to persecution, received 7,291 requests for help between January 1, 2022, and August 30, 2022 (RainbowRailroad.org). Undeniably, there are places in the world where Queer people, including students and teachers, are overtly under attack.

We cannot assume that in Canada we are immune to these influences. According to the brief on police-reported crime statistics in Canada released on August 2, 2022, hate crimes targeting sexual orientation have risen by 64 per cent since 2019, and the brief acknowledges that many crimes go unreported for a number of reasons (Moreau 2022). Data from my previous school board suggests that incidents of homophobia and transphobia are reported in numbers just under incidents of racism. According to results shared on the [Egale Canada website](#), a national study of youth in grades 8 through 12 found that 79 per cent of trans students who had been the victims of physical harassment reported that teachers and staff were “ineffective in addressing transphobic harassment” (Peter et al. 2021). A study called “Suicidality Among Sexual Minority and Transgender Adolescents: a nationally representative population-based study of youth in Canada” states, “We observed that transgender and sexual minority adolescents were at increased risk of suicidal ideation and attempt compared with their cisgender and heterosexual peers. These findings highlight the need for inclusive prevention approaches to address suicidality among Canada’s diverse youth population” (Kingsbury et al. 2022).

So the question is, what can we do as school administrators to help these students?

First, we can understand the importance of intersectionality. The term was coined by critical race theory scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how marginalized identities including race, class, gender and other factors can result in one individual facing multiple forms of oppression (Crenshaw 1989). For example, a Black woman may face both racism due to her

Blackness, and sexism due to being a woman. Crenshaw also highlights how movements such as feminism and the Black civil rights movement do not necessarily incorporate intersectionality. Feminism historically sought equality for women and saw the hiring of all white women for office work as a win, while the Black civil rights movement sought equality for Black people and saw hiring of Black men in a factory as a win (Crenshaw 2016).

Struggles to address intersectionality continue to impact the Queer community. For example, as an Indigenous person, I often reference the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action in my work. How many of the Calls to Action reference two-spirit people? None, despite number 42, which references missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, and despite documented encounters between two-spirit people and police and the negative effects of these encounters on two-spirit people (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015).

Calls to Action 62–65 reference education, including developing and implementing a mandatory curriculum on residential schools, Treaties and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada from kindergarten to grade 12, as well as building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). Catholic and other boards are called on “to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritualities as developed in consultation with Elders and Knowledge and Wisdom Keepers” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). I argue that to do this work authentically, 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities, contributions and contemporary realities need to be included. Additionally, opportunities for students, especially Indigenous students, to participate in land-based education are essential. Suicide is an impulsive act. Learning from and on the land teaches us not to be impulsive, as patience is needed for

hunting and gathering, and mistakes caused by impulsivity can cause disaster.

Here are some actionable suggestions for school administrators:

1. Think of allyship as a verb

- Keep learning about the experiences of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- Intervene when you witness or hear something offensive, and reflect. Is there anything you could or would do differently next time?
- Look for 2SLGBTQQIA+ materials, references, histories and contemporary realities as a regular part of your equity walkthroughs.
- Include an intentional piece of allyship in your school improvement plan, and post in student-friendly language around the school.
- Create peer mentorship opportunities for students within the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.
- Share your learning and undertake some activities with your staff to build understanding.
- Engage with the community. Bring in speakers and promote learning opportunities, such as with Egale Canada and/or a local chapter of PFLAG.
- Model the important use of pronouns.
- Be specific about being anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic – don’t make Pink Shirt Day a generic anti-bullying day. Name specific forms of oppression.
- Support organizations and businesses run by Queer and trans people.

2. Understand the “coming out” process

- Listen to people’s stories, believe them and don’t dismiss them.
- Have empathy – all Queer people experience some losses.
- Understand that coming out is actually life-long, not a one-time thing.
- Never out anybody (reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity) without their consent.



There is no time to waste in challenging **homophobia and **transphobia** within our education settings ... we cannot afford to leave any students behind.**

- Understand there can be social and legal ramifications of coming out.
- For students, respect that they might have one identity at school and another at home, and respect chosen identity, names and pronouns.
- Respect that it is not always safe for students to self-identify at home.

3. Envision an Intersectional Equity Walkthrough that includes 2SLGBTQQIA+ people

- Look for a balanced perspective: are students learning about oppression toward the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community? Are these negative stories balanced with posi-

tive representations of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and contributions?

- Be conscious of visual representation in signage, safe space stickers, Progressive Pride flags, diverse books, morning/break time music, activities and other materials used cross-curricula and all year long, not just during Pride month.
- If your school has a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance), do students know where to go for support? If you don't have a GSA, why not?
- Are there gender-neutral washrooms in the school?
- Do teachers and staff respect student-chosen pronouns, model gender-neutral language (including in non-English classes)

and have conversations in other language classes (e.g., French)?

- Is there “buy-in” from the staff – and what needs to be done to support their learning?
- Are events such as school dances and proms open to the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, or are there only heteronormative discussions and representations such as “prom king and queen”?
- How are you incorporating student voices? What do self-identified Queer students have to say? How is their voice incorporated into the school in a meaningful way?
- Are there opportunities to learn from the land and build resistance to impulsivity?

4. Seek to break down barriers, even if we are not personally affected by them.

- Working to create inclusive schools is a challenge, usually because there is typically resistance to equity work. As Desmond Tutu said, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

In her article titled “There Is No Middle Ground Between Racism And Justice,” Ijeoma Oluo states the following: “I need you to under-

stand, because I need you to understand what those who say that we are ‘pushing too hard’ or ‘asking for too much’ or ‘moving too fast’ are really saying... When you enjoy your freedoms, and you tell those who want their freedoms that they have to wait, that they have to go slowly, that they have to give you time to make uncomfortable adjustments to the amount of privilege that their inequality has afforded you, what you are saying is, ‘You were not born with these rights. You were not born as deserving as me. I have the power and privilege to determine when it is time for you to receive freedom and equality, and my approval is conditioned on how comfortable and safe you make me feel about how that freedom and equality will impact the privileges I enjoy’” (Oluo 2017).

There is no time to waste in challenging homophobia and transphobia within our edu-

cation settings. It is exciting to know that the Simcoe County DSB is now the first school board in Canada to have a graduation coach to support 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Hopefully other boards will follow suit, because we cannot afford to leave any students behind. ▲

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Note: This article is an updated version of one that was originally written for *Principl(ed)*, the publication from the BCPVPA.



The



Journey

A work in progress

By Irfan Toor

Illustration by Suharu Ogawa

Over the past two years, I have had the great fortune – and also the significant responsibility – to guide the OPC in my role as the director of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), as the OPC endeavours not just to foster exemplary corporate leadership, but also to promote equitable and anti-oppressive leadership in our Members.

So where do we start?

➔ A few years ago, conversations around equity and inclusion were occurring at our Provincial Council meetings to help increase the knowledge and understanding of equitable practices. These included conversations around supporting 2SLGBTQ+ students. We discussed things like pronouns, gender identity and the practices that were being implemented in different schools and boards. Given the size of Ontario and the range in size of communities within the province, there were a lot of differences in knowledge, understanding and response. On another occasion, we did some learning as a group on unconscious bias, how it shows up in education practices and how it fosters systemic oppression such as anti-Black or anti-Indigenous racism. Again, there was a wide range in participants' prior knowledge and experiences. It was evident that many of our Councillors had not been exposed to these conversations within the context of their own professional learning, system or school experiences.

We did what many organizations do when they realize they have work to do: we set up a committee. The leadership, including the elected president and Provincial Executive, as well as senior staff, recognized that there was work to be done and that there were some gaps in the knowledge of the Members and in the practices of the organization. The initial committee was formed through a process open to all Members, and since then, three additional sub-committees (Professional Learning; Recruitment, Retention and Advancement; and Policy and Governance) have also been formed.

Committees are great, because they bring some issues out into the open and create opportunities for different voices to be heard. But we all know that many committees struggle in defining their actions and in the resistance they receive from the structures and power embedded in the organization. As well, as products of a colonial system, we are all influenced by our own experiences as stu-

dents and now as school leaders; we unintentionally reinforce some of those inequitable practices.

The initial committee guided the implementation of the first Census to collect demographic data on our Members, as we needed to know who we serve. As much as the Census confirmed our observations (we know that compared to the overall education sector, there is a relative overrepresentation in our membership of cisgender, heterosexual, white, male identities, especially in leadership positions, and a corresponding underrepresentation of Indigenous, disabled, gender-diverse, female, queer and racialized identities), it serves to provide a baseline to see what kinds of changes we might observe when we repeat it over the next few years.

The consultant who managed the data and results also provided some recommendations. These included targeted efforts for representation of different identities; reviewing all policies, procedures and professional learning; and influencing Members and school districts to create equitable and inclusive environments. The recommendations reinforced what the committee members had been thinking, and also have helped us define some of our strategic priorities.

We started to embed some practices, such as encouraging pronoun use in email signatures and on Zoom calls, and regular and consistent use of land acknowledgements. Did we do some things right? Yes. We consulted and continue to consult with community and Indigenous Elders to try and honour the correct people, land and treaties. We accessed the diversity of our membership to provide some learning for colleagues based on different lived experiences. But we also received some feedback and were even called out by some Members who felt our actions were superficial and tokenistic or even oppressive. Recognizing that this is an ongoing journey, we've been trying to approach each challenge as an opportunity for more learning, continuous review and reflection, and regular revision.

The real changes, though, started to occur when we reflected on all of those practices, and asked ourselves whether they were good enough. We rarely used the work we were doing as examples or as justification that we were far along

the journey of equity and anti-oppression. I'm proud of the fact that we approached the work with humility and an authentic interest in improvement.

For a while, we were trying to add, change and adjust our practices from many different directions. This can be a good thing, but I also describe it as "leapfrogging over ourselves." Somewhere in this web of competing actions, it was identified that there needed to be a person who had the dedicated time, knowledge and experiences to co-ordinate and guide this process. There was some conversation as to whether this should be an elected or a staff position, with 'both' as a potential result.

There is a tension that exists here. When there is an identified role, some organizations default to that person and say, "This is an equity thing;



pass it over to them,” so many members of the organization never challenge their own thinking or reflect on their divisional practices. One of our key actions has been to build the foundation of knowledge throughout the organization so that we can access the strengths of our diverse staff and truly effect organizational change. I feel confident and proud that the OPC staff and the Executive are all able to notice and name inequities, and are willing to engage in the reflection and actions it takes to address them.

Another tension is balancing the need to do something now (given the context of COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd, the discovery of the unmarked graves of Indigenous children) with making sure we are being authentic and responsive, rather than just reactive. Our actions and decisions must be rooted in some

consistency that is reflected in our values. That is why the foundational work is so important.

Since we’ve started on this journey, here are some of the things that are visible in what we’ve done:

New structures

- Creation of the senior staff position of the director of EDI
- Elected representatives within each District executive (District EDI reps)
- Staff focus groups to provide feedback with an equitable lens regarding all graphics and publications
- Focus and feedback groups within the Professional Learning department to influence and review all courses and learning opportunities
- Committees and sub-committees to create

action plans related to the recommendations from our Census report (EDI Advocacy Committee)

- Identity-based affinity groups for Members to provide spaces for healing and belonging

New practices

- Regular and ongoing review accessing diverse perspective of all professional learning opportunities
- Regular and ongoing opportunities to engage with community to listen and learn from their feedback
- A commitment to regular implementation of the Member Census
- Designation as a Rainbow Registered organization that fosters safety and inclusion for the 2SLGBTQ+ community

Recognizing that this is an **ongoing journey**, we’ve been trying to approach each challenge as an opportunity for more learning, continuous review and reflection, and regular revision.



- Intentional advocacy within the greater educational community (post-secondary, Ministry, research, etc.) to increase our scope of influence

New learning

- Learning sessions on equity, anti-oppression and Indigenous rights to increase the individual and collective capacity of Members
- Regular learning sessions for OPC staff

- Learning sessions during Council and Executive meetings to increase individual and collective capacities with respect to equity, anti-oppression and Indigenous rights

The invisible aspects of our growth are evident in our attitudes and approach. Many people don't see the behind-the-scenes efforts to examine, discuss and dismantle processes. And, often, changes to process aren't really recognized for the long-term impact that they

may have. Attitudinal shifts are important for this work to be successful. Unconscious bias is at the root of the maintenance of many inequitable practices, so to be able to shift that thinking can also have exponential impact. Building the foundation and maintaining it are crucial.

Some of the steps:

- **Acknowledge that there is a problem** and a need for improvement. Some people are looking for justification, evidence or data.

Unconscious bias is at the root of the maintenance of many inequitable practices, so to be able to shift that thinking can also have exponential impact.



The research has been done and has existed for more than 50 years. If you are having trouble accepting that a problem exists, then you probably need to be reflecting on your own privilege and lack of awareness of the experiences of others.

- **Be willing to engage as a collective.** Yes, many organizations have a designated person, whether that is a system principal or a director, but one of the keys to our progress so far is the collective responsibility taken by all areas of the organization – the staff, the elected representatives and the local leaders.
- **Build your foundation** by engaging in personal and collective reflection and learning. It's not just about organizing a workshop and a guest speaker. The learning and the conversations need to be ongoing and reflective. As Glenn Singleton

(*Courageous Conversations about Race*) says, "Prepare for discomfort."

- **Bring in more voices.** Some people have been actively engaged in the internal and external operations of the OPC for years. But many different voices and identities have not seen a place for their voices. Many of our structural changes have created those opportunities and spaces for more voices to be heard. As well, we are working to become very intentional about de-centring dominant identities and including diverse identities in the external resources we access.
- **Be vulnerable.** One of the hardest parts of leadership is acknowledging that there are more voices and perspectives than just your own. As well, we have all participated – knowingly or unknowingly – in

practices that have reinforced systemic oppression. Be prepared and accept that along your journey you will be reminded of those instances and that some of your efforts will be criticized and doubted. It will take time to build trust and demonstrate your commitment. Social injustice has been occurring for centuries. It won't get fixed overnight.

It's always messy. You can't wait until you're "ready" – who even knows what that looks like? And every day that education systems delay the reduction of oppression is another day students will experience harm. ▲

Irfan Toor is the OPC's director of equity, diversity and inclusion.

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HELP



The author would like to note that they previously worked as a mental health nurse within schools and are currently a suicide prevention trainer. However, there are no conflicts of interest to declare and no financial interest to report. The author certifies that the submission is original work.

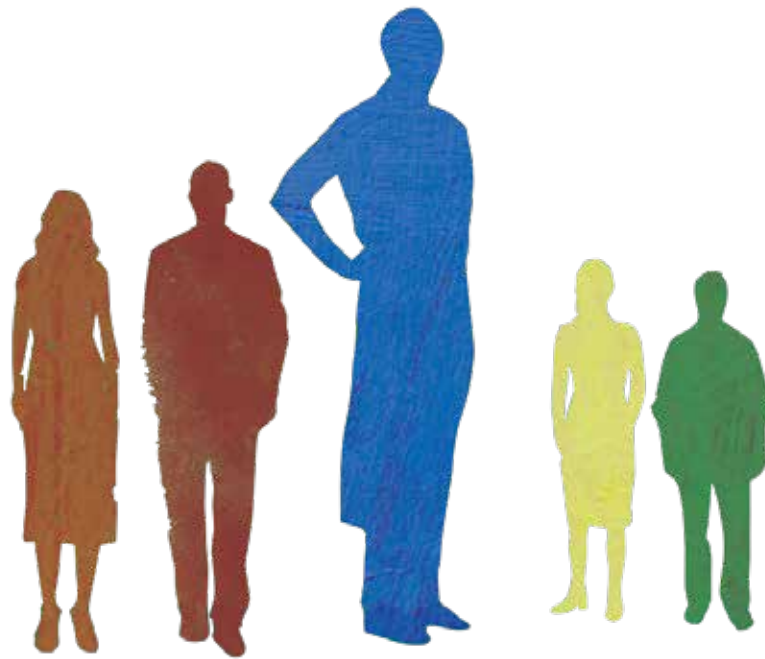
Trigger Warning: The following article discusses the concept of youth suicide within the school setting.

Supporting High School Teachers about

By Miranda Bevilacqua
Illustration by Lino

Many staff lack
information and/or
confidence to help
students

Suicide



Youth between the ages of 13 and 19 account for 25 per cent of all hospital admissions related to attempted suicide (Kutcher and Szumilas 2008). Further, death by suicide is one of the leading causes of fatality among youth in Canada (Government of Canada 2022). Sixty-eight per cent of individuals who have seriously contemplated suicide first thought about it in early adolescence (Becker 2017), highlighting the importance of addressing youth suicide within high schools. Suicide rates in youth have tripled since COVID-19 pandemic-related lockdowns began in 2020 (Brown 2021). Although school-aged youth are surrounded by principals, vice-principals, teachers and mental health, little is known about what teachers want to know regarding suicide and whether teachers have the knowledge to recognize youth at risk. This article will discuss the prime position principals are in to support teachers in effectively identifying youth at risk of suicide and, in turn, reducing such tragic fatalities.

Background

Many mental health issues that arise in early adolescence include conditions that can lead to suicide, such as depression and anxiety (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse 2016; Youth Mental Health Canada 2018). These young people find themselves at a period of brain growth and development where impulsivity is emerging, along with their first experiences of puberty and hormones (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse 2016; Kodish et al. 2016). Youth yearn for connectedness and attempt to foster their own sense of belonging while balancing peer influence and acceptance among their classmates (McDonough et al. 2016). Changes in hormones, mental health issues and exposure to adverse social experiences, when combined, have been linked

to an increased likelihood of experiencing suicidal ideation (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse 2016; Kodish et al. 2016; Statistics Canada 2019). Youth suicidality is a serious health concern that supports the need for early identification and intervention to lessen the chronic effects of mental health issues and reduce deaths caused by suicide (Calear et al. 2015; Story et al. 2016). These concerns can be addressed in the school setting by principals and teachers who may identify some of these red flags if suicide prevention strategies are understood (Cramer et al. 2019).

A multitude of suicide prevention curriculums, such as workshops, have been used across various disciplines (Bailey et al. 2017; Walrath et al. 2015). However, the opinions and perceptions of high school teachers regarding

their learning needs on suicide prevention are lacking (Mo et al. 2018). Time constraints and redundancies are also deterrents for investing in a prevention program (Whitney et al. 2011). Teachers have felt legally obligated to address youth at risk of suicide (McConnellogue and Storey 2017), but understanding their role as a teacher needs to be further studied, along with what education would fit their needs. Though research has been conducted on teachers' perspectives on preventing suicide in children and adolescents (Ross et al. 2017), there is a lack of focus on what resources and educational content would be beneficial.

There is a lack of information regarding what teachers believe they need in terms of education on signs and symptoms of suicide that may manifest in their students (Ross et al. 2017; Whitney et al. 2011). Exploring these learning needs provides principals with information to best support their staff with appropriate professional development (PD) on suicide prevention. A [qualitative study](#) was conducted to explore the perceived learning needs of high school teachers regarding youth suicide and prevention efforts within Northwestern Ontario (NWO) (Bevilacqua 2021).

Methodology

The study was approved by the researcher's academic institutional Ethical Review Board. The research question for this study was **"What are the perceived learning needs of high-school teachers regarding suicide prevention?"**

In total, 14 high school teachers across NWO were interviewed. The participants had a wide range of experience, with some teaching over 20 years, others having experience working within transition classes and others working in regular classrooms.

Findings

When participants were asked how they prefer to learn, there was some variation; however, most preferred visual, hands-on and in-person training. Learning opportunities that enticed the teachers in ongoing PD were based on the relevance and needs of their student population. They unanimously reported that time constraints were a barrier to ongoing PD. Some participants shared barriers such as lack of relevance to their student population. All participants were open to the notion of suicide prevention training.

A few teachers had formal experience in suicide prevention training. Of those trained, none of their training was recent. Despite little training provided on suicide prevention, most teachers stated they felt comfortable discussing concepts such as suicide. Some teachers had experience working within the guidance department, which gave them more opportunity to access training given they had fewer time constraints, versus those teaching, who were tied to their assigned course teaching timelines. Many par-

ticipants mentioned they didn't know much in relation to suicide, while a few stated they possessed knowledge allowing them to recognize basic red flags such as a change in behaviour, though they felt they required more extensive information.

A prominent trend that emerged almost immediately was that they did not know how to approach or address a student at risk. The concept of "knowing what to say" became a key concept in the findings of this study. The suggestion of a written script and pathway to execute or address a student at risk was mentioned multiple times. Another common trend was not knowing what to say regarding the teacher's scope when talking to students at risk. Many participants expressed legal implications that could arise, and did not know what they could or should do within their roles as teachers in terms of dialogue with a student at risk. Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic was raised multiple times as a current stressor on their student population, as there is an apparent increase in the struggles among their students.



Youth between the ages of 13 and 19 account for

25%

of all hospital admissions related to attempted suicide

Interpretation of the Findings

The following section will discuss the findings and interpretations that generated the themes and categories. The first theme indicated that teachers prefer ongoing PD based on a mixture of styles that is relevant and current to their student needs. Teachers realize that time constraints prevent ongoing training, a barrier also mentioned in existing literature (Fulks et al. 2019; Whitney et al. 2011). Although many programs are available on suicide prevention (Shannonhouse et al. 2016), the few teachers from this study who had received training mentioned that they felt they require refreshers or follow-up training and would benefit from programs specific to their learning gaps, including relevance for their students' needs.

The second theme established that teachers are interested in knowing the legalities and their scope when addressing youth at risk of suicide; however, knowing what to say is required. Teachers feel legally obligated to address youth at risk but require more information on what that entails (McConnellogue and Storey 2017). Although training was limited, teachers stated that they felt comfortable talking about suicide and understood basic warning signs, but they wanted to know more in-depth risk factors. The results from this study share new insights that support previous literature, indicating that teachers would like to know what their scope entails and what they can legally say to youth at risk of suicide.

Future Implications

The results of this study have the potential to impact policy changes in that principals can look at implementing specific education and guidelines around suicide prevention. Youth suicide is far too common

and has only increased since the global pandemic (Killgore et al. 2020). It is apparent that mental health issues arise during the time frame when youth are attending high school (Kodish et al. 2016). Many school boards in Ontario have the privilege of retaining mental health professionals who can aid in the identification, treatment and support of youth at risk (Ontario 2020); however, the professionals are not able to monitor these students to the same degree as are teachers and principals. Teachers are the first line of contact when interacting and intervening with vulnerable youth (U.S. Department of Education 2007), and these teachers can be supported by their principals with appropriate PD.

Conclusion

Youth suicide is a global concern that warrants attention from all disciplines involved. It is evident that youth spend most of their time within the walls of academic institutions surrounded by their teachers. Teachers want training about the in-depth warning signs in a manner that encompasses various pedagogical styles. High school teachers voiced time constraints, not knowing what to say and not understanding their legal responsibilities when discussing suicide to be barriers to ongoing learning associated with suicide prevention.

In conclusion, high school teachers realize that youth suicide is a concern that must be addressed. The findings of this study can assist

principals in supporting their teachers who will inevitably interact with a youth or child at risk of suicide, ultimately reducing deaths and adverse effects associated with youth suicide. ▲

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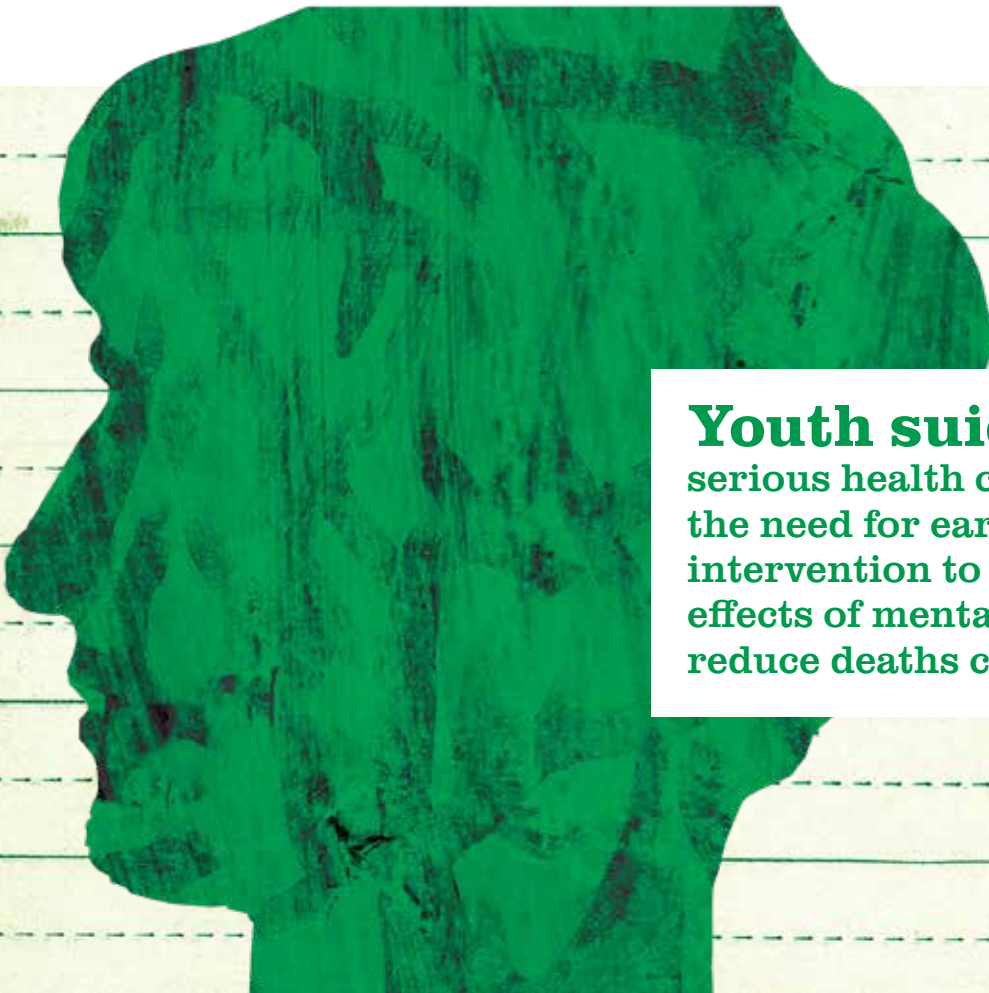
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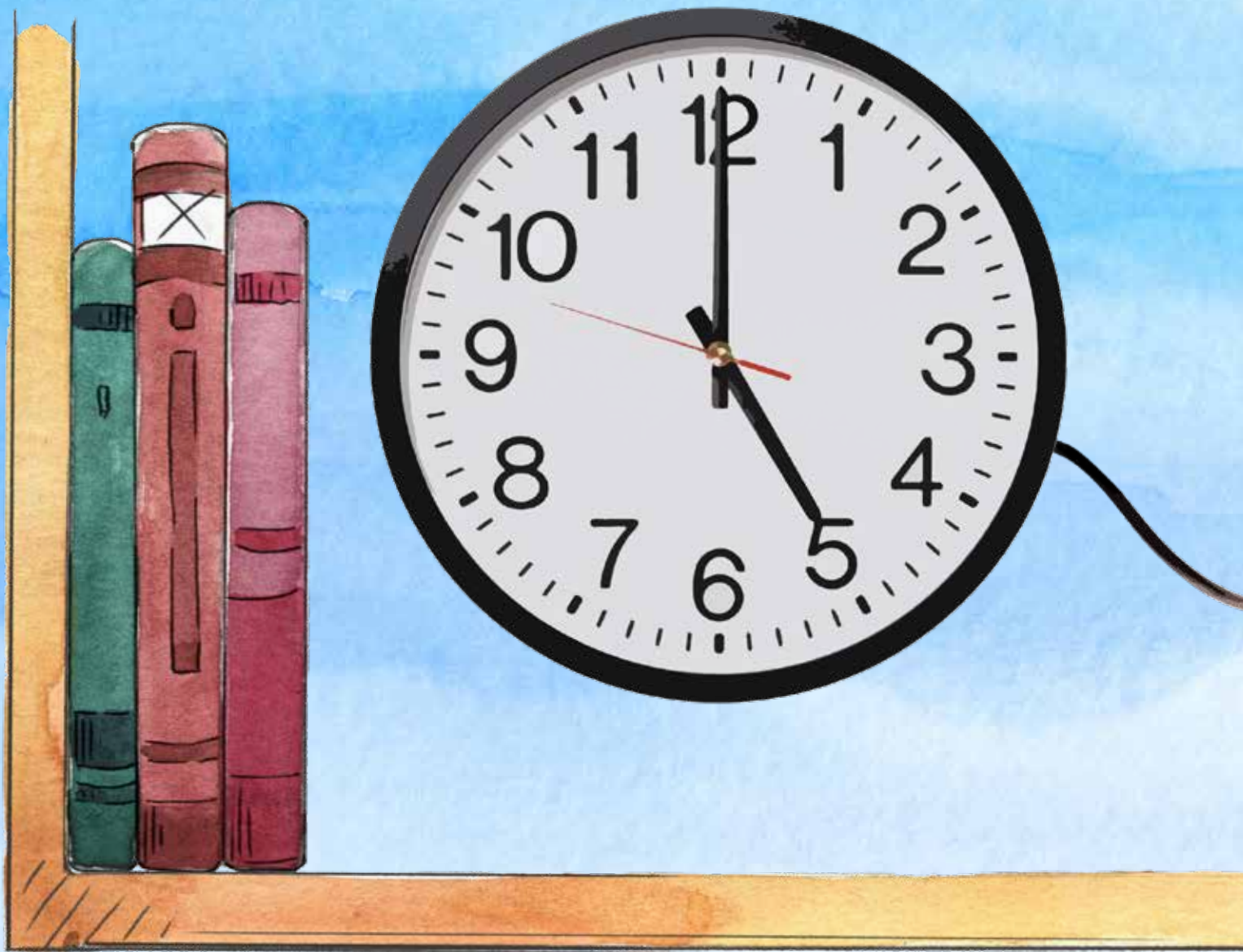
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DIS— A recommendation or a right?
CONNECTING
FROM WORK

IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS



By Paula Hall

In November 2021, the Government of Ontario amended the *Employment Standards Act* to include *Bill 27 Working for Workers Act*, which specifies the need for businesses or organizations with 25 or more employees to develop a Disconnecting from Work policy. This legislation, which received Royal Assent in December 2021, is the first of its kind in Canada. It seeks to improve the work-life balance of employees in Ontario as utilization of technology at home increases, especially for remote learning and working.

Disconnecting from Work is defined in the *Act* as not engaging in work-related communications (including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages), so as to be free from the performance of work. In the context of district school boards, this legislative change required contemplating how to address the cultural practice of employees being expected to respond to communications outside of their regular workday, while adhering to terms of employment, collective agreements and school community members' expectations. While the government refers to the new legislation as Disconnecting From Work, the narrow function of this legislation – essentially to create a shared policy – appears to be more of a recommendation to unplug rather than a right.

This legislative shift is welcomed by education employees, and although it is limited in affording employees a **right** to disconnect, it will cause a shift to current school cultures and organizational practices. Mindful implementation of this new directive is required so we do not create more systemic barriers for those school community members in education communities who represent equity-seeking groups. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of these new practices will be critical to the success of this initiative.

Right to Disconnect versus Disconnecting From Work

While the *Act* supports the concept of disconnecting from work, it does not specifically afford employees the **right** to disconnect from work. To date, the government has not issued regulations that set out specific expectations for organizations and businesses around an employee's right to disengage. The legislation only requires employers with 25 or more employees to develop a policy on disconnecting by June 2022. The policy is to be shared with current and new employees within 30 days of its approval and within 30 days of the hiring of a new employee. There are no specific enforcement mechanisms or consequences for

... the **RELIANCE ON DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY** in the workplace has resulted in organizations and businesses maintaining the unhealthy practice of digital engagement outside of the scheduled workday.



employers that breach the terms of their own disconnecting policies.

The legislation has not given consideration to different types of businesses or organizations, and therefore offers no guidance on how to address the complexity of applying the legislation. As part of a professional work sector, education employees may be required to perform their duties within regular hours

of work and perform professional obligations outside of those regular hours (e.g., board, parent or staff meetings; preparations for teaching; etc.). The legislation does not exempt any employee group from the policy (i.e., the director of education, superintendents, principals, managers, supervisors and casual workers are all included).

Boundaries and Impacts of Digital Communication

The boundaries between being “at work” and “not at work” have blurred because of the rapid advancement and adoption of information and communication technology, and the ability to work remotely with relative ease (e.g., high-speed internet, wireless communication, smartphones and laptops). Before this technology was widely available, communication between workers occurred mostly at a communal workplace during defined hours. According to *The Jordan Harbinger Show Podcast* featuring Cal Newport on the topic of “Reimagining Work in a World Without Email” (2021), it was not until the 1990s, when email became a critical tool for organizational communication, that we began to see employees struggling with the burden of attending to work outside of regular hours.

The changing nature of work means that many employers have increased access to workers during their private time, and workers may feel pressure to continue to be available after hours. This pressure may be heightened if they observe other workers or management conducting work during “off” hours (e.g., sending emails, particularly when expecting a response). Employers and supervisors may inadvertently reward this behaviour through praise, promotions and bonuses for responsive employees. There is concern that these rewards unfairly disadvantage workers who are unable to remain connected because of family responsibilities or health reasons, or because they were not provided the tools to work remotely.

According to a [Government of Canada](#) 2019 Issue paper entitled *Disconnecting from Work-related e-Communications Outside of Work Hours*, there is broad worker support to have uninterrupted time away from work. The reasons given

include that checking and answering work-related emails interferes with family and personal time, employees need more time to rest outside working hours, thinking about work at home causes stress, and all work should be done during defined work hours. However, these expectations do not necessarily align with the evolving world of work according to the perspective of employers. In the research, employers point out that the nature of work has changed.

According to the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#), many organizations run continuous operations that sometimes require workers to be available outside of traditional working hours. The reasons for this include the fact that business does not stop at the end of the workday, employers cannot always predict when work will need to be done, employees should be flexible to work whenever necessary, and supervisors and managers work more hours and sometimes need answers from employees outside of regular working hours.

While employees and employers understand and appreciate the desire to disconnect, the reliance on digital technology in the workplace has resulted in organizations and businesses maintaining the unhealthy practice of digital engagement outside of the scheduled workday. In Ontario, many school districts use online software outside of the regular workday to secure casual workers, such as occasional teachers (e.g., Apply to Education). For many casual employees, there is currently no option to ‘disengage’ from this process after the regular workday because no other system is available to address this need. Interestingly, boards invested in these software systems because being tied to a house phone to secure work was not desirable, and systems of calling casual employees to find coverage had many limitations and inefficiencies.

Disconnecting from Work, and the Role of a Principal/Vice-Principal

The new legislation will challenge current culture within school communities as we move away from daytime, evening and weekend communication with district staff including superintendents, our colleagues, students, parents/guardi-





ians and community members. As the legislation does not exempt anyone, including the director of education, from following the directives set out in the local policy, it will be incumbent on senior leaders to model and reinforce healthy work practices, as this will impact school-level organizational compliance. With new expectations for principals and vice-principals to disconnect from work after their regular hours or upon the completion of their professional obligations (e.g., attending school events, School Council meetings, etc.), they are also asked to respect their staff's right to disconnect after hours. Modelling a healthy relationship with technology has become the responsibility of all education leaders through this shift, and its success depends on how administrators respect and reinforce the parameters established by it. For example, making contact for a non-urgent matter after employees' regular workday will no longer be an acceptable practice.

This change will be a challenging one for many principals and vice-principals, as current workflow and cultural practice calls for the school leader to attend to tasks and communications after the school day ends. Spending time in classrooms, being on duty, participating in activities and, in the past few years, supervising classes when occasional staff are not available, are all priorities for administrators during the hours of the school day. Principals are not sit-

ting at their desks, responding to communications or completing necessary paperwork until the students and staff have left the building or virtual space for the day. Nor is there clarity about when the school day starts and ends for principals and vice-principals.

Due to this demand, boards will have to ensure that the Disconnecting from Work practices provide flexibility so that staff can attend to work when they are available to do so. Supporting staff in using tools and practices such as removing email notifications or scheduling an email to send the next business day will be important. New practices related to disconnecting from work will also benefit many administrators who feel pressure to respond to digital communications on evenings, weekends and holidays. While urgent matters will always require an immediate response, other less pressing issues can be addressed the following workday once these policies are fully implemented.

Disconnecting as it Relates to School Community Members

While this new legislation comes as a welcome step toward workplace wellness for many staff, students, parents/guardians and school community members may feel anxious about how this change will impact their ability to receive support from school staff. From a functional perspective, disconnecting policies have the po-

tential to create a less responsive school system when issues arise. Students, especially those who access their teachers via email to ask for clarification or support or who have inquiries related to their assignments, may have to wait until the next school day to access their teacher. Parents/guardians who have concerns about an issue that impacted their child during the school day might need to wait until the following morning to hear back from teachers or administrators.

While this change may not be welcomed by all school community members, it may necessitate a shift in how schools and families communicate. This paradigm shift opens up opportunities for more phone calls and in-person communications during school hours, which can strengthen relationships with school leaders, students and their families. While digital communication is convenient, it limits interpersonal communication and connection, which supports empathy-building and deepens understanding of multiple perspectives. Once communication through digital means after hours is no longer common practice, school leaders will have the opportunity to build new pathways forward with all school community members during the regular school day.

Disconnecting from an Equity and Human Rights Perspective

New directives around disconnecting will have an impact, directly or indirectly, on all employ-

... it will be incumbent on senior leaders to model and reinforce healthy work practices, as this will **IMPACT SCHOOL-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLIANCE.**

ees and school communities. It is unclear how that may disproportionately impact members of equity-seeking groups. One great benefit of current work cultures is how they allow for responsiveness to communications from stakeholders in flexible windows of time. People who represent voices in non-dominant groups or who may not adhere to colonial or traditional school or work hours may need to reach out to schools outside of the regular workday or on weekends when they are available. Establishing boundaries

for communicating outside of school hours may mean that the school system may inadvertently create more systemic barriers for already marginalized students and families. For example, parents who have irregular work hours or multiple jobs may not be available to engage with the school while it is open during the day, so it is critical for engagement after those hours if individuals have concerns, urgent or non-urgent, that need to be addressed.

Conclusion

Without question, encouraging education employees to take firmer steps to balance work-life obligations is a positive change that should have an appreciable immediate impact. Disconnecting from Work represents a shift away from current organizational practices of non-stop responsiveness to digital communications, especially in the role of school principal/vice-principal. While benefits will be realized by staff, implementation of these policies needs to be done in thoughtful, equitable and comprehensive ways to ensure no one is negatively impacted, especially the students and families we proudly serve. ▲

Paula Hall is the superintendent of people, culture and leadership in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board located on Algonquin Anishinabe homelands.

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Celebrating 25 Years!

On **April 1, 2023**, the Ontario Principals' Council will celebrate our 25-year anniversary. We'll be acknowledging this milestone through March 2024 with several initiatives and events that celebrate and build on 25 years of quality leadership in public education. Watch for a retrospective video, Gala Dinner celebration (April 2) and the Summit on Public Education in Canada.

Ontario Principals' Council
25 YEARS

We want to thank all of you for helping us build the organization we have today, representing close to **5,400 principals and vice-principals** in every English public school board in Ontario.

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Mark Your Calendar

March

1

[SEAQP March 2023](#)

Application deadline: February 15

3

[Emerging Leader Development Program \(ELDP\)](#)

Module 6 – Data Informed Decision Making

Application deadline: February 24

4

[PQP Spring 2023](#)

Application deadline: February 18

20

[ELQP Winter 2023](#)

Application deadline: March 6

25

[TLTEQP Spring/Summer 2023](#)

Application deadline: March 4

27

[PDC: Module 4 – Mentoring and School Leadership](#)

Application deadline: March 13

[PDC: Module 13 – The Principal's Role in Mental Health Awareness and Trauma-informed Schools](#)

Application deadline: March 13

April

2

[25th Anniversary Gala Dinner](#)

Ticket deadline: March 27

3–4

[OPC Summit on Public Education in Canada](#)

28

[Emerging Leader Development Program \(ELDP\) – Module 7 – What are the Legal Duties of a Principal?](#)

Application deadline: April 21

May

1

[PDC: Module 8 – Leading the Kindergarten Program](#)

May 1–June 2

Application deadline: April 17

[PDC: Module 2 – Instructional Leadership for School Improvement](#)

May 1–June 2

Application deadline: April 17

12

[Emerging Leader Development Program \(ELDP\) – Module 8 – Growing Your Personal Leadership Resources \(PLRs\)](#)

Application deadline: May 5

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From the Ashes: My story of being Métis, homeless, and finding my way

By Jesse Thistle
 Simon & Schuster Canada, Toronto
 ISBN: 9781982101213
 Reviewed by Michelle Jubinville

From the Ashes is a memoir and first book written by a York University assistant professor and Métis-Cree author, Jesse Thistle. He was born in 1976 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan,

to a young Métis-Cree mother and a father of Algonquin-Scottish heritage. His parents separated early on because of his father's heavy drinking, promiscuity and violence. Jesse and his two brothers grew up experiencing neglect, hunger, separation and trauma, which he describes as the intergenerational damage caused by colonialism for many Indigenous children and families, including his own. As a teen, he turned to alcohol and drugs because of ongoing instability, abuse, and the grief he felt from moving between homes and always missing his parents. Jesse spent many years homeless on the streets of Toronto, in and out of jail and struggling to survive.

Throughout his book, Jesse adeptly uses both poetry and prose to describe his life story and to share how he managed to build resiliency, understand and come to terms with his identity, and overcome the multiple obstacles he faced including dropping out of high school, becoming implicated in a murder investigation, calling the police to report crimes he hadn't committed just to find a safe place to sleep and the various relationships that eventu-

ally soured because of mental health and dependency issues.

At a turning point in his life, Jesse returned home to attend his grandmother's funeral, where he met an old school friend, Lucie. While they reconnected, Jesse recognized how Lucie could provide the unconditional loving relationship and focus he desperately needed to help determine and realize his future goals. Jesse served his parole conditions and worked to maintain a steady job while continuing his education. Lucie and Jesse eventually married and have been together ever since. After many years of uncertainty, Jesse has finally achieved success in creating both the life and family he always longed for as a child. He now uses his books, teaching and public voice to share his personal experiences in support of progress and policy change for other Indigenous people who have experienced similar challenges.

Having worked with many self-identifying Indigenous students and families through my role as a system consultant for special education, as well as those

dealing with trauma, I would recommend this book as one individual's lived experience to help deepen awareness and empathy regarding the complex factors that can impact Indigenous youth and connect us to our shared humanity. If we can actively listen to understand the root of someone's personal experiences and behaviours, we can better support early-intervention strategies to help teach skills and remove barriers, implementing effective structures that better meet their personal needs and help to improve their outcome for the future.

Though the content of this book may be triggering to some, when educators fully understand how trauma can pervade the lives of students, we are better able to work together and problem-solve collectively in support of human rights education and relationship building, which include authentic voices, resources, beliefs and worldviews that create belonging, engagement, achievement and well-being for all members of our schools, systems and communities. ▲

Michelle Jubinville, MEd, Inclusive Education & Leadership, is an elementary French teacher at Dr. G. J. MacGillivray Public School in Courtice, Ontario, in the Kawartha Pine Ride DSB.

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Recovering after Hurricane Fiona

Impacts on a Nova Scotia school community

In October 2022, OPC made a \$530 donation to Dr. W. A. MacLeod Consolidated School in Nova Scotia to assist with recovery after Hurricane Fiona. This donation was made in lieu of ordering flower arrangements for the 2022 OPC Awards Dinner.

Dr. W. A. MacLeod Consolidated School has a population of over 500 students from various marginalized and vulnerable populations spanning a very large, mostly rural demographic. Hurricane Fiona has had a huge impact on our community. It was devastating for the community as a whole, but with the majority of our students coming from rural communities, the impacts are lasting well beyond any of our imaginations. Power outages for many of our students lasted for many weeks.

During the outage, our Breakfast Program and Weekend Backpack Pro-

gram did not operate. Thankfully, we were able to access the school and donate the thawed items to our local fire departments that were offering comfort stations. Although it was great to donate the food, it left us with nothing when school resumed. The donation from the Ontario Principals' Council helped to replenish the food for our food security programs.

We were also able to supply turkey dinners for 50 families as part of our backpack program. At the time, the power was still out and Joe MacEachern, a [SchoolsPlus](#) outreach worker

and Red Seal Chef, cooked and delivered hot turkey dinners to those families. Joe also runs a cooking program for students (pictured above) and much of the food for that program was also able to be replenished.

The generous donation by the OPC allowed us to serve close to 120 students with hot lunches at school each day the power was out at their homes, and offer replacement food for the cooking and backpack program. The donation not only helped to feed our students hot lunches, but it helped to alleviate overwhelming financial stress and burden on our school families. Thank you for your support! ▲

Allison Wilson is the principal of Dr. W. A. MacLeod Consolidated School in Stellarton, Nova Scotia.
✉ moneilap@ccrce.ca



OPC Summit on Public Education in Canada

April 3 and 4, 2023

Toronto, Ontario

#CanEdSummit



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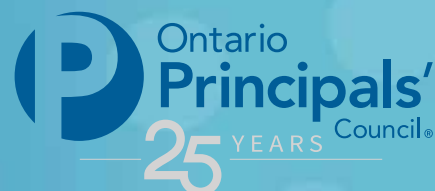
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