

# OPC Register

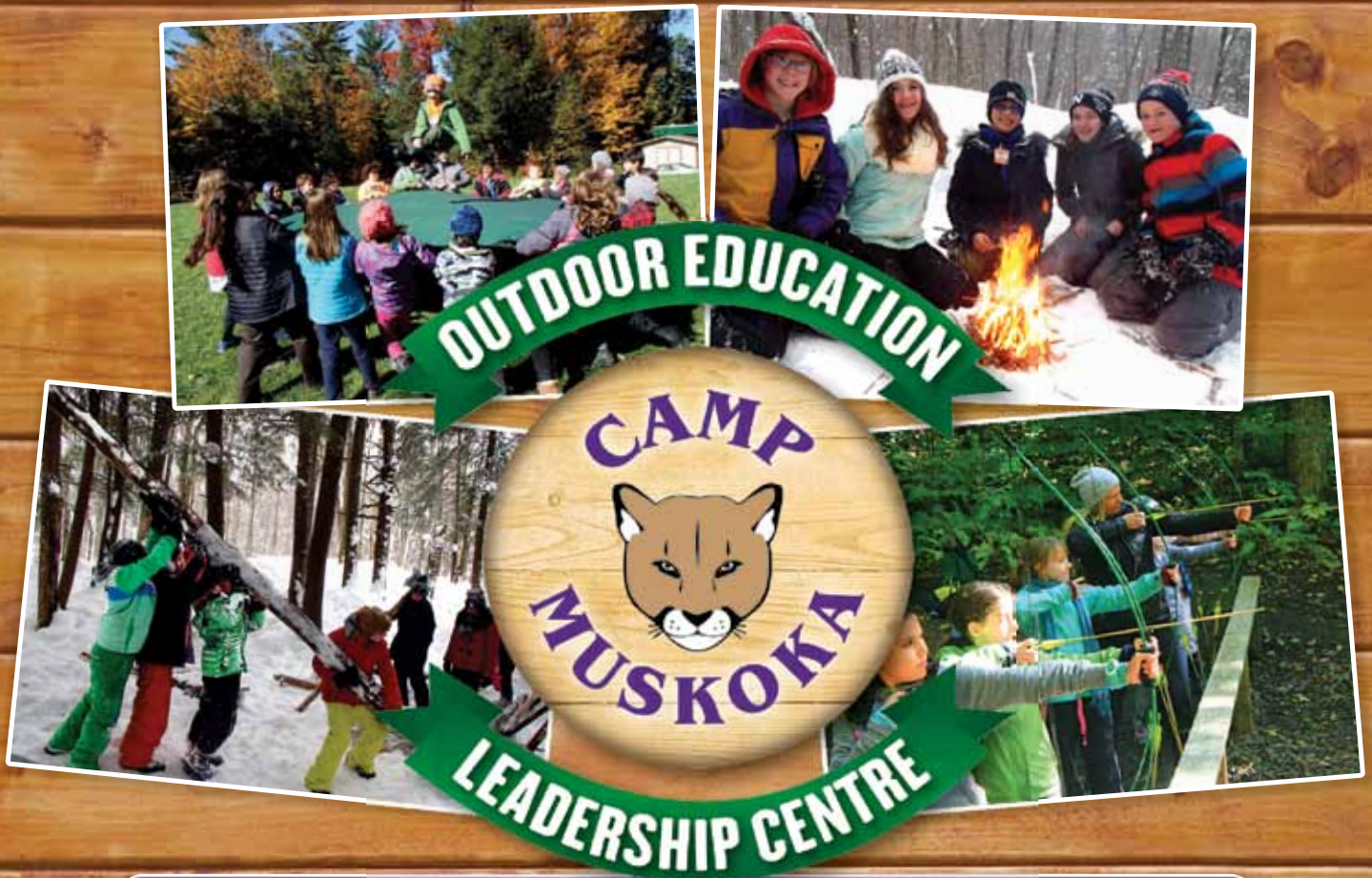
THE MAGAZINE FOR ONTARIO'S PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS

## TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Resources are needed to help administrators respond effectively



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An ongoing responsibility for school leaders



Cover Illustration by Carl Wiens

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# Political Advocacy

Advocating for the 3 issues that affect our Members



The OPC works to promote the professional interests of our Members and advocate on behalf of public education. With the next provincial election just a few months away, I want to take this opportunity to share how we work to

advocate on behalf of principals and vice-principals while centering our advocacy on the needs of students. Our political advocacy takes place regularly through meetings with MPPs, Ministers, Deputy Ministers and other education stakeholders. This year we have chosen to focus on three issues: student safety and well-being, seniority-based hiring and panel pay equity.

The journey began in August at the OPC Executive retreat, where we collaborated with the senior staff to discuss how we might continue our political advocacy and engagement with all political parties in preparation for the 2018 election. In reviewing our data and past advocacy campaigns,

we felt that focusing on a few areas would have the greatest impact. We then shared these ideas with Provincial Council and Local Leaders when they met in October. Since our Provincial Council is comprised of at least one elementary and one secondary representative from each of the 31 public school boards in Ontario, we were sure to gain valuable insights on the issues facing school leaders. I continue to be amazed at the dedication and skill with which our Provincial Councillors and Local Leaders strongly advocate for their local colleagues while balancing, respecting and supporting the needs of their colleagues from around the province. This ensures that we are

able to be inclusive of many voices. After a long discussion, we landed on these three issues.

The first issue is supporting student safety and well-being. We want all stakeholders to understand that principals and vice-principals value, strive for and promote safe and healthy school environments for everyone in the building. Over the years, student needs have become more complex, and there has been a decline of specialized staff to help support the growing needs of our students. Specialized resources, training and personnel are needed to facilitate positive learning environments for all. Ontario students deserve to learn in the best learning environment possible.

Our second issue, seniority-based hiring, also known as Reg 274, has been an ongoing concern since its implementation five years ago. We have shared many examples of the challenges this regulation has posed for administrators, such as limiting the principal's ability to hire teachers that reflect the diversity of the student body. Another example is an increased hiring process that can last up to six weeks, resulting in students being taught by numerous teachers during this time. We support transparent and reasonable hiring practices to ensure the best teacher is in the appropriate classroom. Seniority should not be the deciding factor.

Finally, with respect to panel pay equity, elementary administrators are still paid thousands of dollars less in salary

despite the fact that all principals and vice-principals are required to complete the same level of undergraduate education, graduate degree and specialized training. All administrators are subject to the same statutory and regulatory duties and responsibilities whether they are in an elementary or secondary school. We know that boards cannot address this inequity without taking money from another budget line because the control of salary improvements lies solely in the hands of the provincial government. We also know that this government has been focused on promoting equity and expect that this same practice will be applied to the funding formula.

Student safety and well-being, seniority based hiring and panel pay equity are the three issues that are the focus for our political advocacy this year. The OPC will continue to reach out to all political parties to ensure that MPPs and other education stakeholders continue to understand the roles that principals and vice-principals play in supporting the students of Ontario. I encourage you to visit the OPC website to learn more about these issues. ▲



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# Happenings at OPC ...



OPC President Mary Linton (left) and then-Minister of Education Mitzie Hunter (right) at the Combating Systemic Racism and Breaking Down Barriers Conference this past October.



ISL Instructor Bob Jackson (right) and ICP Past President Lisa Vincent (2nd from left) enjoyed meeting and engaging in conversations with colleagues from around the world at the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) 2017 in Cape Town!



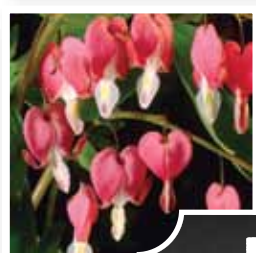
OPC President Mary Linton, Executive Director Allyson Otten and ISL Director of Operations and Program Development Andy Scott (in front of OPC sign) met with Chinese visitors from the Jinan Education Bureau.



Left: Peter M. Dewitt stands with the amazing sketch note created by Debbie Donsky summarizing his Leading Student Achievement (LSA) presentation on School Climate: Leading with collective efficacy. Right: The LSA team welcomed international visitors from Brazil.



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# MAKER



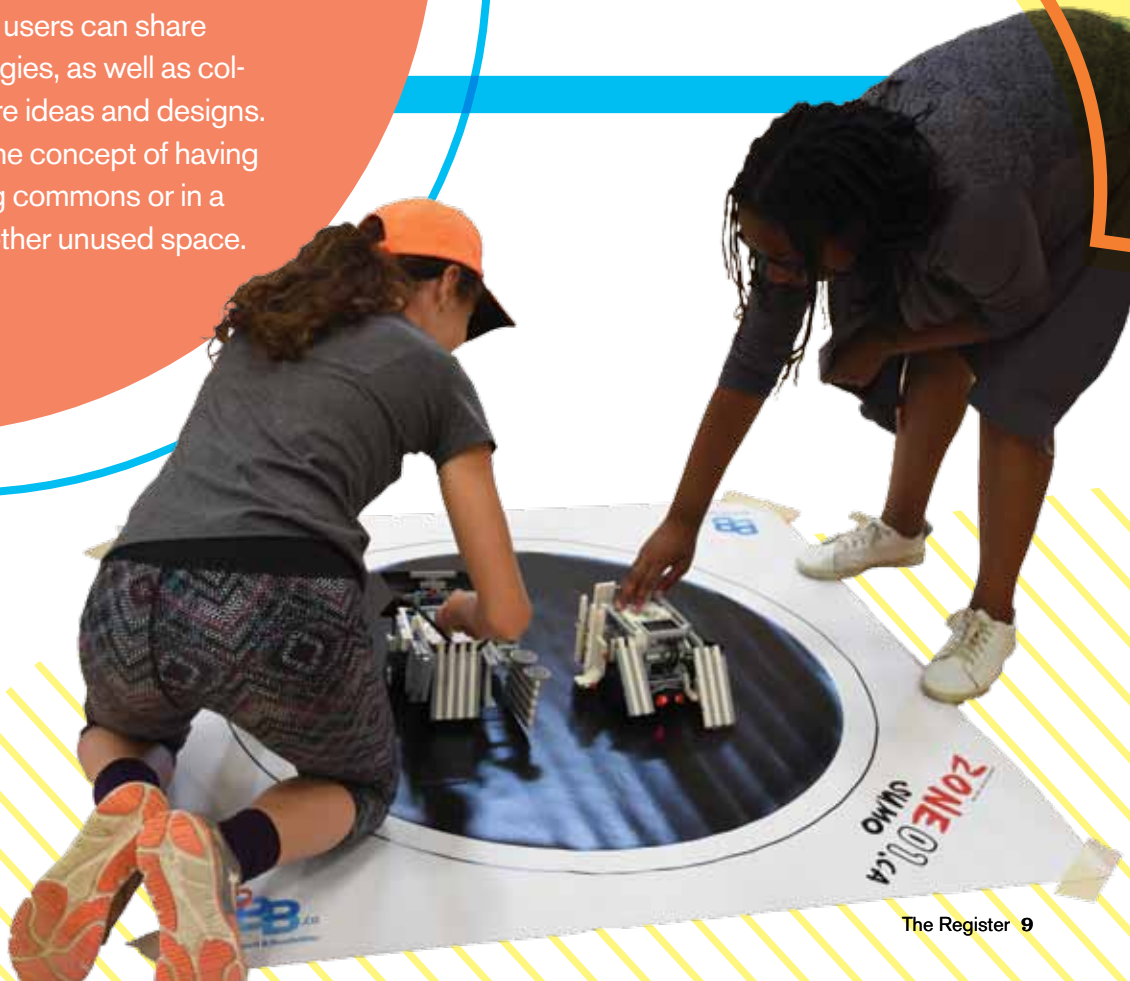


# SPACES

Students are more engaged when taking part in practical learning

By Janette Hughes

A makerspace is a place where learners gather to design, create, tinker and innovate. Community makerspaces are typically located in libraries or community centres so that users can share resources, tools and technologies, as well as collaborate on projects or just share ideas and designs. Many schools are embracing the concept of having a makerspace in the learning commons or in a repurposed computer lab or other unused space.



Although having a designated space for making is convenient in terms of housing the equipment and providing a place for students to work on projects that require more space, the spirit of the maker movement involves establishing a maker culture that promotes inquiry, play, imagination, creativity, curiosity and perseverance by learning through mistakes (Halverson & Sheridan, 2014).

The students worked in three teams to explore Lunar, Mars and Trappist-1 dwarf star colonies. They chose mission specialties, conducted weekly mission briefings (in conjunction with their teacher) and created vlogs as they worked through the inquiry. They engaged in a wide variety of activities including creating 3D renderings in TinkerCAD of artifacts that directly related to their research. Some teams created vehicles or pieces of equipment they might need in their colony; others designed colony facilities such as labs or medical buildings. Some of the students

examined the role of rovers in space exploration and colonization. They worked with Sphero programmable robots, using them as the engine to drive a rover design.

Encountering challenges along the way was part of the learning. For example, the Sphero “engines” had speed but did not have the power to support the heft of the rover bodies. While some students persevered to solve this problem by lightening the rover structure, others decided to turn to LittleBits to design and develop a more powerful vehicle. This inquiry is a great example of the design thinking process, through which students considered and defined the problem they needed to solve, designed a creative solution, built a prototype and then put it to the test. When it did not work, the students engaged in the iterative process and redesigned their models.

To extend this activity, the teacher suggested that the class build a very large topographical representation of a Mars or Lunar terrain and the students enthusiastically undertook the challenge. Ultimately, all of the rovers were able to navigate this terrain successfully and the students were very excited by what they accomplished.

#### **Developing 21st Century Skills Through Making**

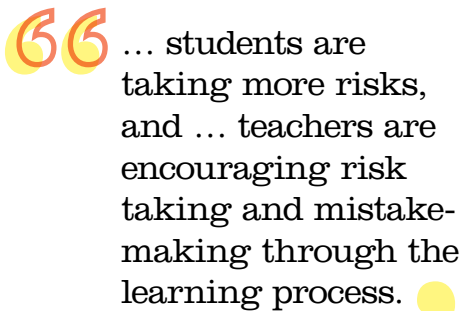
In using the design thinking process, students are developing critical and creative thinking skills, as well as the important, so-called “soft skills” such as collaboration, perseverance, problem solving, decision making and communication. These skills, though not currently measured on EQAO tests that focus more on content specific knowledge and competencies, are permanent or life-long skills necessary for students to succeed, not just in school, but in life and the workplace. As one principal in

the project noted, through maker pedagogies “students are taking more risks, and ... teachers are encouraging risk taking and mistake-making through the learning process.” Another principal observed that when students are engaged in “making” they are less cognizant that they are “doing” a specific subject like math or science. She commented, “if they are working on science or math through a maker project, they are more focused on the project itself and less worried about whether it’s math or science (and what they used to like or dislike about those subjects). Also, students are thinking more in 3D and are working more collaboratively and using problem-solving language and processes.”

Although every teacher and principal involved in the project has identified a number of positive outcomes in terms of student achievement, teacher professional growth and a shifting school culture, establishing and implementing a makerspace in a school also poses challenges, as is the case with any kind of innovation. From operational concerns such as how to manage and monitor materials and technologies, to instructional questions of how making connects to curricular goals, we have learned a lot along the way. We offer several tips for administrators who want to join us on this journey of making. Seasoned school leaders will not be surprised that most of these suggestions are just part of good leadership.

#### **Promote a Creative, Collaborative Culture**

In selecting their teacher leads for the makerspace initiative, principals tended to use a shared leadership model and chose early adopters or innovators. They offered support in a variety of ways, from assisting with the ordering of materials/equipment to providing more flexible and creative scheduling to allow teachers time to collaborate. Most importantly, they promoted the same kind of learning environment for their teachers as they wanted their students to promote for their students. They were given “permission” to make mistakes, opportunities to share their learning with other teachers and time to collaborate and reflect on their own learning. The learning experiences for teachers were richest when the administrators learned alongside them, partly because principals and vice-principals could empathize



... students are taking more risks, and ... teachers are encouraging risk taking and mistake-making through the learning process.

A maker culture can be infused into learning whether it is in a fully equipped makerspace or in centres in a classroom (Hughes, 2017).

In our research with teachers in 11 school boards across Ontario, we have found that maker pedagogies have led to increased levels of engagement and motivation for all students, and every participating teacher has also noticed improvements in student behaviour and attendance. The teachers have also reported that there have been significant gains in academic achievement, especially for those students who do not always succeed using more traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Most notably, maker pedagogies have promoted the development of important 21st century competencies such as creative and critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, leadership, innovation and perseverance.

#### **Inquiry-Based Learning in the Makerspace**

To offer an example of an extended inquiry using the makerspace, one team of teachers and their grade five and six students engaged in an integrated science, social studies, literacy and technology project on the theme Colonization in Space.

with the teachers about some of the challenges, but also because they experienced first-hand the potential of maker pedagogies in action.

### Think Big, Start Small, But Start!

Think big, start small, but start! While careful planning is second nature for school leaders, we sometimes get bogged down in the details. There is no definitive list for what schools should purchase for a makerspace. Each makerspace should be unique, tailored to the community and culture of the school. In our project, one school with a large population of Indigenous students decided to place an emphasis on Indigenous ways of making. A school in downtown Toronto felt it would be difficult sustaining a makerspace financially, so they opted for more low tech, cost effective materials and equipment. In our University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) STEAM 3D Maker Lab we never purchase new tools/technologies in large numbers. We order two or three kits or enough materials to experiment with and then we try it with students and observe how they engage with it. We consider how we

might best use it with students and how it might connect with curricular goals. If we are satisfied with its effectiveness and potential for student learning, we may order enough to have four or five groups working with it at once. We prefer students to collaborate because it socializes their learning and it is easier on the budget too.

The notion of starting small is less intimidating for teachers who have not yet made the shift to digital. Teachers can begin with unplugged or low-tech activities, and then progress to mid tech and high tech as their confidence and technological expertise increases. One elementary teacher in our project did not feel she was very tech savvy, but she wanted to promote maker culture with her students. Using Eric Carle's book *A House for Hermit Crab* as a starting point, she had her students design and make different kinds of houses for the character in the story. This kind of making offers a low floor (easy entry), a high ceiling (can be easily enhanced for more advanced learners) and wide walls (can be expanded and used in multiple contexts) (Papert, 1980; Resnick et al., 2009). Students can begin with paper,

cardboard and other crafting materials and then add circuitry components to enhance their houses with LED lights and sensors.

### If You Build It, They Will Come

Finding an appropriate place to house your makerspace can be difficult for many schools. Of the first 11 schools in our project, seven of them reorganized their library/learning commons space to accommodate maker activities. Two schools that had previously been secondary schools had large unused spaces that could be repurposed. Two schools had real space constraints and stored their materials/equipment in a central storage room for sign out by teachers for use in the classroom. All of these models can work well.

I liken the maker movement in education to teaching dramatic arts. Although we report on drama as a specific subject, it is really a vehicle for learning in all subjects. It is great to have a theatre, with a stage, lights, sound board and tiered seating for an audience but drama can happen anywhere, anytime. The same is true for making, which is a pedagogical approach and works well



**... MAKER PEDAGOGIES** have led to **increased levels of engagement and motivation** for all students, and every participating teacher has also noticed **improvements in student behaviour and attendance.**

... **MAKER PEDAGOGIES** have promoted the development of important 21st century competencies such as creative and critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, leadership, innovation and perseverance.

even in a centre approach in the classroom. Though often associated with STEM subjects, making is interdisciplinary and can be woven into any subject area effectively.

One of the principals in the project commented that as maker culture was infused throughout the school, she saw learning spill out of the classrooms and into corners of the school that had not previously been considered learning spaces. In an interview she shared, “In my role, I walk around this

**66** In my role, I walk around this building a lot and what I love is seeing the kids on any given day in hallways and corners, taking the learning outside of the four walls of the classroom into different spaces in the building.”

building a lot and what I love is seeing the kids on any given day in hallways and corners, taking the learning outside of the four walls of the classroom into different spaces in the building. You hear a lot of chatter and a lot of talking, students to students, students to teachers, teachers to teachers.”

Many schools are installing LEGO walls in the front hallways or painting walls around the school green, so that students can use these as green screen stations. In every school we have worked in, teachers and administrators talk about how the makerspace is generating excitement in the building, among students, teachers, parents and the community. As a result, more teachers are hoping to begin using the makerspace and the tools, materials and equipment. In this way, the innovation is scaling up in schools and across school boards.

**Inquiry Based Teacher Professional Development is the Key to Success**

As teachers make the shift from more traditional teaching methods to an inquiry-based, passion

driven approach where their role is as a facilitator offering just-in-time scaffolding, they need more support and more professional learning. As one principal commented, “this project has been a hands-on way for students and teachers to learn together. It does require ‘letting go’ of the ideal that teachers are the knowledge-givers, and this is an important step forward.”

In the work we do at the Faculty of Education, and in this project specifically, we offer teachers inquiry-based professional development that gives them agency over their own learning and growth. We ask them what they want to start with and we plan with them. If we want our students to learn through play, inquiry, innovation and creativity then shouldn't our teachers have opportunities to learn using the same principles?

For this reason, the kinds of pre-planned professional development sessions typically offered at conferences or board workshops may not be suitable. Perhaps we need to rethink how we offer professional development. We have found that it is more advantageous to provide onsite professional development that is tailored to the specific needs of teachers. This kind of personalized learning is what we want for our students, so we should ensure our teachers get the same. ▲

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# Social Media

## Choosing the Right App for your School

**S**ocial media is a helpful, free and accessible tool principals and vice-principals can use to share their school's day-to-day activities with various audiences. It can encourage staff interaction, student participation and parent/community engagement. There are multiple social media platforms or applications (apps) to choose from. The audience you are trying to reach will influence which app you use and how. The unique features of each platform should complement your story.

### Instagram

Instagram is a visual storytelling platform. It is a place to share photos of extracurricular activities, school events and innovative classroom projects. Instagram has some photo editing capabilities and different photo filters. It has compatible apps such as Collage Maker and Boomerang, a video-loop app. Highlight the people in the photo by adding an informative caption and tagging (identifying) participants. Instagram can be a community hub for the school to promote internal engagement by highlighting staff and students. Instagram's timeline isn't chronological, so don't share time-sensitive information here.

### Snapchat

Snapchat is even more visually driven than Instagram. Using Snapchat, you can take pictures and videos which can be edited with fun filters, geographic tags or "geotags" and stickers. You can design, or have a student create, a geotag for your school. Pictures and videos can be shared privately with your friends, to your story (which all your friends can view) and downloaded



directly to your device. After a set amount of time, either 10 seconds for those you send to or 24 hours for your story, the media will disappear. Snapchat appeals to the student audience. It would work well as a tool to improve school morale and student involvement. Try sharing talent show clips, classroom highlights or drama and sports events to showcase students and staff.

### Twitter

Twitter is universal in that it connects your school with students, staff and parents. Using a school account on Twitter would allow you to share time-sensitive information to parents such as snow day updates or upcoming parent/teacher night details. If staff members have accounts where they share classroom activities, you could retweet their posts onto the school page for the wider school community. You could also encourage discussion by sharing education-related news and research articles. To involve students, share pictures of team events including club activities,

sports, plays and sign-up reminders for activities. Need inspiration? Try searching some of the schools in your district and see what they're sharing on Twitter!

### Facebook

Eighty-four per cent of Facebook users are in the 30-49 age range, making it a great tool to reach parents and the wider community (sproutsocial.com). To get started, create a school Facebook page. This will serve as a touch point for parents on school events and activities, successes by teams/clubs and updates on schoolwide or classroom projects. This page would also be useful for prospective students and their parents looking to learn more about your school, staff and current student activities before their first day. Facebook also has the option to make event pages where you can promote upcoming events or fundraising projects to parents and the surrounding community. ▲

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# TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Resources are needed to help administrators respond effectively

By John Bowyer and Ken MacNaughton

Illustration by Carl Wiens

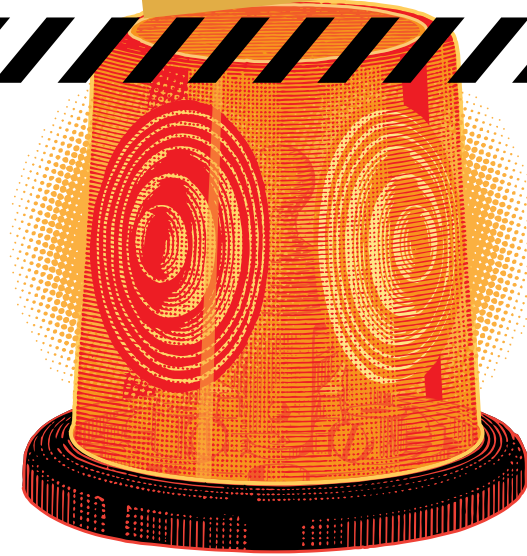
In 2016, a tragic event occurred at a secondary school in the Durham District School Board (DDSB). A student assaulted other students and staff with a knife, resulting in non life-threatening injuries.

The impact of this traumatic event was felt profoundly by students, staff, parents and the community. The event also affected other schools in the DDSB, resulting in an increase in threat assessments throughout the board.

**... MOST BOARDS HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DEAL WITH**

**A TRAGEDY OR CRISIS, BUT FEW HAVE PROTOCOLS**

**FOR DEALING WITH A TRAUMATIC EVENT.**



What we learned from this traumatic event is that most boards have the resources to deal with a tragedy or crisis, but few have protocols for dealing with a traumatic event. Boards have processes in place to manage the operational aspects of a traumatic event, such as how to go into a lockdown, and often have strategies to support students and staff, but what is lacking are the necessary supports for administrators who not only manage the traumatic event, but also care for the emotional well-being of their students and staff.

Traumatic events should be viewed as part of a continuum that includes incidents that impact a school, such as a suicide, death of a student/staff or a natural disaster. Although there are similarities, there are differences between a tragedy or crisis and a traumatic event. According to Kevin Cameron (2011), an international expert on violence, threat assessment and trauma, the differences are as follows

- A tragedy or crisis only impacts the immediate school community. A traumatic event usually impacts the school, other schools and the community.
- A tragedy or crisis can be contained by the school. A traumatic event requires a systematic approach, including additional support and resources beyond what the school can provide.
- With a tragedy or crisis, there is a high degree of predictability about who is most likely to be impacted. During a traumatic event, it is challenging to predict who will be impacted.

The intent of this article is to outline the lessons learned by DDSB as a result of the traumatic event and the subsequent actions taken.

#### **Response to the Traumatic Event**

All DDSB schools practice a Hold and Secure and a Lockdown during the school year. As a result of this preparation, the staff and students at the school responded quickly and appropriately to the traumatic event.

In response to 911 calls, Police and Emergency Medical Services were dispatched to the school, and arrived in six minutes. By the time they arrived, the assailant had been apprehended by staff. During a debriefing, emergency personnel reported that they were impressed by the effectiveness of the lockdown.

Media arrived on scene almost immediately and remained on site throughout that day and the next. Their presence was disruptive to the process. Although dealing with the media was time consuming, the police services and the DDSB worked collaboratively to ensure that there was consistent messaging.

Since police cleared the school room-by-room, the school remained in a lockdown for three hours.

A command post was established near the main office. There was some confusion as to roles and responsibilities at the command post. In addition, there wasn't a coordinated approach to provide help from board staff.

The length of time it took to clear the school, coupled with the confusion at the command post, and the lack of a coordinated approach by board staff to provide support for the school negatively impacted the communication flow and decision-making.

A trauma response team was mobilized by the DDSB to support the school. There were concerns about the process for supporting students



and staff, who felt supported in the short term, but required more in the long term. Providing formal follow-up supports, especially for vulnerable students and staff, was necessary.

### Policies and Procedures

Following the incident, a number of policies and procedures were updated to respond to gaps that became evident.

A major concern in a school during a lockdown is ensuring that staff, including supply staff, have access to locked rooms. In response, many DDSB schools are being re-keyed or incorporating keyless entry of rooms using fobs.

Due to the ambient noise, there were areas of the school in which the lockdown announcement couldn't be heard. The DDSB has begun the process of enhancing the speakers inside and outside schools to inform people when the school is in lockdown. In addition, the board developed an electronic message that can be safely initiated.

The process for the deployment of the DDSB's Trauma Response Team, and the communication of that process, needed to be more systematic. Kevin Cameron provides training for board staff on Threat Assessment and Traumatic Response. The use of protocols including Violence Threat Risk Assessment requires staff, students and community members to report worrisome, threatening and violent behaviour. Ongoing training for all stakeholders is necessary to ensure that concerns are reported. "Developing a strategy to prevent and respond to potential incidents of targeted school violence is a challenging and complex task. There is no single, universal prescription that will be effective in dealing with every situation or crisis that will confront school administrators, law enforcement officials, parents, and other individuals and organizations in the community" (Fein, et al., 2002).

Dealing with students who are medically fragile, have special needs and/or have significant behaviour issues was a challenge. The police were not aware of the complexity of the needs of these students. An addition to the revised Police/School Board Protocol was the expectation that schools develop a process for dealing with students with high needs, and share the plan with emergency responders. This is common practice for a fire and needs to be expanded for all emergencies.

Effectively communicating with all of the stakeholders was an issue. The use of technology and social media hindered the ability for police and emergency responders to do their job. In response, expectations for communication and the use of technology have been embedded into the revised Police/School Board Protocol.

This revised Protocol includes the need to practice a lockdown during non-instructional times. A lockdown practice

occurred during "off-hours" at secondary and elementary schools. From those pilots and the subsequent debriefings "best practices" were developed and shared with the system.

### Considerations for Trauma Response

In order to provide clear direction to DDSB staff, a policy and procedure was developed specifically on trauma response. The procedure outlines the process to be followed at the board and school levels when a traumatic event occurs. Since effective support requires a coordinated response, the roles and responsibilities of board and school Trauma Response Teams are delineated in the procedure. It also includes supporting resources such as a sample staff meeting agenda, letters for parents, funeral protocols and suggested messages to be used for communication.

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

Training and resources are required for school teams to be adequately equipped to respond to and recover appropriately from a traumatic event. In response, training for the DDSB policy and procedure will include online training modules for staff and administrators that build capacity, understanding the impact of "vicarious trauma," and offer multiple suggestions on how and where to seek appropriate support. If not dealt with directly, the distressing feelings and

**“THERE IS NO SINGLE, UNIVERSAL PRESCRIPTION THAT WILL BE EFFECTIVE IN DEALING WITH EVERY SITUATION OR CRISIS THAT WILL CONFRONT SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS, PARENTS, AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY.”**



troubling events can replay over and over in the course of a lifetime, creating a condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder.

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

In addition, connecting with and talking to a trusted colleague helps the administrator continue the process of addressing his or her negative emotions. Having a colleague check to ensure that the administrator is looking after themselves is an effective well-being strategy. Taking action allows the administrator to restore a sense of control and counteracts the feeling of powerlessness. Interacting and working with others in a positive way allows administrators to regain control and begin to heal (McGrath, 2016).

The policy and procedure on traumatic response also includes specific resources for supporting students and staff during and after a traumatic event. These supports include guidelines for a teacher to follow when leading an effective classroom discussion, suggested supports and prompts for both students and staff and

Crisis Services contact information.

Training on the policy and procedure will be implemented for school teams. In addition, a “mock” traumatic event will be conducted at a school to practice the board’s readiness.

#### Communication During and After a Traumatic Event

The most significant challenge when dealing with this traumatic event was communication.

Improving the communication process was an important aspect of the policy and procedure on traumatic response. The DDSB recognized that it is important to assign communication to board staff to allow administrators to address the needs of students and staff. It is important to have a communication plan, which includes pre-approved messages, developed prior to a traumatic event. This ensures that communication isn’t delayed while messages are approved. Communication tools, such as the board Twitter account, website and media releases, need to be identified and prioritized for use during a traumatic event.

An essential component to supporting trauma is to create and sustain safe and accepting learning environments in schools based on positive relationships. These learning environments occur when

educators establish a foundation of positive well-being and mental health. Positive, safe learning environments help students and staff become more resilient, and as a result, allow them to better cope with trauma. Ontario’s Well-being Strategy for Education, Discussion Document defines well-being as, “. . . a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. It is supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths. Well-being in early years and school settings includes helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Craig (2017) stated that a high yield, low cost way to build a positive school climate and to enhance resiliency in students and staff is by establishing caring relationships. This can be as simple as a staff member touching base and having a quality conversation with each student for a couple of minutes each day. Another effective

## POSITIVE, SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

**HELP STUDENTS AND STAFF BECOME MORE RESILIENT, AND AS A RESULT, ALLOW THEM TO BETTER COPE WITH TRAUMA.**



**AS COMPASSIONATE CAREGIVERS,  
ADMINISTRATORS, SUPPORT STAFF  
AND SCHOOL STAFF NEED TO BE AWARE  
OF THE IMPACT ON THEIR OWN WELL-  
BEING (“VICARIOUS TRAUMA”) WHEN  
DEALING WITH A TRAUMATIC EVENT.**



strategy to build positive relationships is using restorative practice, such as the use of Restorative Circles, to allow the teacher to touch base with students at the beginning or end of each class (Craig, 2017).

Although creating the conditions that support resiliency in students and staff is important, it is essential that schools and boards develop systematic plans to address traumatic events when they occur. By being methodical and reflective in our planning and implementation, schools will be able to create learning environments that are healthy, safe and caring. ▲

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# Professional Learning

## 20 years of offering supports to our Members

In 1997–1998, the Interim Council charged with determining the future direction and mandate of the pending professional association that would support principals and vice-principals (the OPC), had only vague ideas of the professional learning needs of school leaders. While the Principals' Qualification Program (PQP) was a mandated pre-requisite before assuming the role, universities were the only eligible providers. Workshops and learning opportunities were offered by boards and federations, but learning professionally was not a high priority as we now know it has to be. Today, all leaders in Ontario are continually striving to improve their practice and influence improved student learning in their schools.

In 1998, the newly-formed Council was devoted to supporting its Members and their desire for growth and learning. Principals and vice-principals were anxious to understand the new realities of their role. Thus, the arm of the OPC called Centre for Leadership was established. It became obvious that leadership at every level of the system was going to be critical for us to survive and thrive in the new world.

Three very strong principles became the foundation of the Centre for Leadership

1. We needed to design, develop and deliver the learning opportunities that our Members felt they needed, by listening to the membership and responding with programs that met



their needs. Data on Member concerns made the challenges evident.

2. The concept of providing professional learning that was designed, developed and delivered by our Members and practitioners reaped many unforeseen rewards. It morphed into a higher level of sharing and networking than we could ever have anticipated, and it gave our colleagues the recognition they deserved as they moved through uncharted political water.
3. From the outset, the OPC has been a credible advocate for students and learning environments. With that came the prospect of influencing the learning needs of our Members. The number of Ministry-funded programs that have been offered since 1998 is reassurance that the work of school leaders is respected and cherished. The principle of working with the government to help them achieve their goals was a new way of thinking 20 years ago.

So, 20 years later, we've gone from face-to-face workshops in all corners of our vast province to online workshops. We've gone from the original Centre for Leadership to three arms of professional learning: Education Leadership Canada (ELC), Principal Association Projects (PAP), and International School Leadership (ISL). Our programs support leaders at home and abroad as they emerge and prepare for their administrative roles, acquire the mandatory certificates to make them eligible for the role, improve their practice to impact improved student learning or prepare to move to the Supervisory Officer level (SOQP). The OPC has been a driving force in raising the quality of leaders across the province. Many nations around the globe have tapped into our 'secrets of success' and emulate what we do and the culture we have influenced. We should be very proud! ▲

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## School Leader Associations

### Supporting the well-being and work-life balance of school leaders

By Katina Pollock and Karen Edge

The role of School Leader Associations (SLAs) is becoming more important, as they now function as knowledge brokers, advocates and policy activists for principal health and well-being. In November 2016, the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) hosted the third annual International Symposium on the Role of Professional Associations for School Leaders in Toronto, Ontario. Delegates from over 32 SLAs from across the globe participated in this symposium, entitled *Global Trends for All Generations: Exploring work-life balance and well-being*.

The symposium explored research on work intensification, generational theory and its influence on principal work, aspirations, and work-life balance and well-being. As education scholars, we facilitated and attended the symposium; in this article, we will present some of the work from the symposium – specifically, the ways SLAs can advocate for school- and system-level support and develop opportunities for their members.

#### **EVIDENCE OF THE PROBLEM:**

#### **WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE SYMPOSIUM?**

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An emerging body of evidence indicates that educator well-being and work-life balance is a growing concern for SLAs

(Catholic Education in Western Australia, 2015; Pollock, 2014; Riley, 2013; 2014; 2015). The symposium strategically evaluated global trends for all generations (Edge, 2014), explored the meanings of work-life balance and well-being and discussed research evidence from several large-scale projects. Throughout the symposium, several important strands of thought and action emerged that should underpin any forward-thinking strategies intended to address principal work-life balance and well-being, including context, pace of change, system design and educational incentives, and the new requirements for a new generation of leaders (Edge, Descours & Frayman, 2016; Pollock, 2014; Pollock, Wang & Hauseman, 2017). The symposium also revealed that SLA

delegates actively wrestle with how best to understand, support and advocate for principals when addressing current and future work intensification, and with the influence this intensification has on principals' work-life balance and overall well-being. Although many organizations are working to address the issues, delegates expressed frustration with the level of activity required to fully understand and create innovative advocacy programs for leaders and policy-makers alike.

Globally, SLAs are developing strategies to support their members' well-being and advocate for better approaches to work-life balance. These support strategies range from sharing research and information on secure member websites to curated professional learning opportunities. Associations also offer mentoring and coaching support, self-assessment tools and confidential phone lines. They are increasingly developing and/or commissioning the gathering of robust bodies of research evidence about their members' well-being and work-life balance to enrich support and advocacy, practice and decision-making. Some resources are more interactive than others and most appear to be proactive measures. These strategies are not necessarily discrete activities but are combined with a suite of strategies under an association's well-being and work-life balance initiative. Based on discussions at the 2016 Symposium, the following outlines some of the strategies that have been implemented around the world.

### INFORMATION SHARING FOR MEMBERS

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Several SLAs post information and advice for their members about well-being through member access-only websites. For example, in the UK, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) website offers member advice and answers to frequently asked questions about a number of topics, including working with parents and students, principal working conditions and pay and equity issues.

### CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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There is great diversity in the content and delivery of SLA-curated continued professional learning. Associations are adopting a wide range of formats for professional learning delivery, including social media-based, online, face-to-face or a combination of these. For example, the Irish Primary

## SLA delegates actively wrestle with how best to understand, support and advocate for principals when addressing current and future work intensification, and with the influence this intensification has on principals' work-life balance and overall well-being.

Principals' Network (IPPN) offers professional online learning courses for newly appointed principals; The European School Heads Association (ESHA) participates in workshops organized by The Joint Action for Mental Health and Well-being to address school-based mental health focused on students and youth; and the OPC supports Members by delivering professional learning through several mediums, including combined face-to-face and online modes.

The online component also embraces social media platforms, such as Twitter. Several associations are using Twitter chats focused on key topics from the course content. The duration of learning opportunities varies from one-day workshops, to week-long events, to continuous learning over a two-year period. Professional learning opportunities that are supported by SLAs appear to exhibit different content focuses, including developing leadership skills and knowledge to promote principal success, with the indirect effect of improving principals' work-life balance and well-being. For example, the Association of Washington School Principals' (AWSP) programs, such as those supporting aspiring principals, are currently designed to address the recruitment and retention issues experienced within its jurisdiction. The Catholic Education in Western Australia (CEWA), on the other hand, has established an intensive eight-day program specifically focused on experienced principals' physical and mental health and well-being.

### COACHING

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Although coaching can be considered a form of professional learning, we categorize coaching separately because of how

**FACT**  
Globally, SLAs are developing strategies to support their **members' well-being** and advocate for **better approaches to work-life balance**.

professional SLAs use it within their jurisdictions. Associations use coaching for several reasons: to encourage a particular culture and climate shift in schooling, as a strategy for recruitment and retention and to improve personal health and well-being. The Western Australia Primary Principals' Association (WAPPA) uses coaching principles and skills to lead a coaching culture, with the goal to create and support more cohesive partnerships with community role-models and provide health services to improve student learning outcomes

## SLAs are increasingly acting as knowledge brokers, advocates and policy activists on behalf of school leaders and their wider education systems.

and well-being. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) uses coaching as part of its recruitment strategy. The ASCL partnered with other organizations to create the Leading Women's Alliance, which includes a coaching component to encourage and support more women into applying for senior leadership roles. Other individual coaching programs specifically target individuals and their health and well-being. For instance, CEWA provides an executive health assessment initiative that includes health coaching to target and improve health and well-being.

### MENTORING

Mentoring and coaching are closely related practices, but symposium participants isolated these forms of principal support. For example, the Catholic Secondary Principals' Australia (CSPA) and the British Columbia's Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) engage new principals in mentoring opportunities. In British Columbia, the provincial leadership standards were developed to provide a framework for new and aspiring principals to engage in mentoring, coaching and peer supports.

### HEALTH-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Assessment tools are nothing new in education, but the established demand for well-being assessment tools in education for students is expanding as demand rises for teacher and leader well-being resources. However, few

teacher and leader assessment tools currently exist. The CEWA provides a leading-edge example in its executive health assessment tool focusing on school leaders. The assessment can include blood pathology, a health and well-being survey, physical assessment and medical examination.

### USING BODIES OF RESEARCH TO INFORM PRACTICE AND DECISION-MAKING

Generally speaking, applied education research has focused on the technical aspects of principals' work, such as administration, management and leadership. Less research emphasis has been placed on principals' work-life balance and well-being. Recently, SLAs began to commission and endorse research that specifically focuses on principal well-being. For example, the Australia Primary Principals' Association (APPA) is engaged in a research initiative called Principal Health and Well-being Project. This project explores the role of employers, system leaders and government-level departments in supporting quality leadership and high performing principals in every school in Australia. The CEWA also published a Principal Health and Well-being study that examines principals' role perceptions, role stress, sleep habits, physical health, work practices, and exercise, as well as the impact of the role on principals' families and colleagues. Other Australian professional SLAs, such as the Australian Government Primary Principals' Association (AGPPA), are using findings from the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Well-being survey (Riley, 2013; 2014; 2015). In Canada, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), in partnership with the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP), conducted a pan-Canadian study focused on principals' workload (CAP & ATA, 2014). Provincially, the OPC has commissioned and supported a number of studies on principals' and vice-principals' work and well-being (Pollock, 2014, 2017). These studies have informed existing professional learning initiatives, generated additional professional learning opportunities and advocated for principal supports at the school district and provincial government level.

School leader well-being and work-life balance is a growing concern for SLAs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Not all professional school leader associations are organized in the same way. Some have slightly different mandates, membership structures, authority and funding structures.



TABLE 1

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		
<b>Jurisdictional Policy Advocates</b>	<b>Redefining School Leaders' Roles</b>	<b>Advocacy for School- and System-level Support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarify intent</li> <li>• association awareness campaign</li> <li>• awareness campaign for school leaders</li> <li>• promote collaborative working relationships with policy makers</li> <li>• promote collaborative working relationships with teacher unions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continued focus on instructional leadership</li> <li>• role clarification with new initiatives</li> <li>• review management related activities</li> <li>• realistic expectations around Information Communication Technology use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lobby for dedicated building management position</li> <li>• negotiate benefits</li> <li>• appropriate resource allocation</li> <li>• streamline work processes</li> <li>• reduce paperwork</li> <li>• limit out of school meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Support and Development Opportunities</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• awareness campaign for association members</li> <li>• streamline processes</li> <li>• facilitate school level policy development</li> <li>• more effective use of websites</li> <li>• support phone lines</li> <li>• leverage social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mentorship programs</li> <li>• coaching</li> <li>• continued professional learning as a lead learner</li> <li>• diverse options for professional learning content</li> <li>• professional learning for mid-career school leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional learning that focuses on well-being and work-life balance</li> <li>• individualized, self-paced learning opportunities</li> <li>• professional learning</li> <li>• professional learning opportunities to current principal workload</li> <li>• online learning options</li> </ul>

## SLAs are amplifying the voices of individual school principals and pressing for changes that will benefit current and future school leaders ... using their emerging roles to also support and advocate for principal health and well-being.

### FACT

Associations are adopting a wide range of formats for professional learning delivery, including **social media-based, online, face-to-face** or a **combination** of these.

All have different degrees of accountability with numerous public education stakeholders. Overall, however, they have the same aims and advocacy goals. Our recommendations fall into four advocacy areas: jurisdictional policy advocacy, redefining the school leader role, advocacy for school- and system-level support and delivery of school leader support and development opportunities. Recommendations under each of these four advocacy areas are briefly mentioned in Table 1.

### CONCLUSION

Principal health and well-being is high on the agenda of almost all of the SLAs participating in the third annual OPC hosted Summit. As work continues to intensify, principals often seek SLA advice and support. In turn, SLAs are increasingly acting as knowledge brokers, advocates and policy activists on behalf of school leaders and their wider education systems. SLAs are amplifying the voices of individual school principals and pressing for changes that will benefit current and future school leaders. It is encouraging to see how SLAs are using their emerging roles to also support and advocate for principal health and well-being.

Next to teachers, school leaders have the most influence on student learning in schools. Their role is central to supporting and ensuring positive teacher influence in this learning process. This can only happen when they are well – physically, socially, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. This state of well-being, however, is not always easy to achieve; many school leaders will need help. This is why it is so important for school systems and associations to provide support for them. Providing this assistance may mean the difference between successful and not-so successful schools.

To learn more about the outcomes of the Summit and international trends and issues related to principal well-being and work-life balance, we encourage you to check out the White Paper emerging from the Summit entitled *Principal Work-life Balance and Well-being Matters* found at <http://www.principals.ca/documents/PrincipalWellBeing-17-FINALb.pdf> ▲

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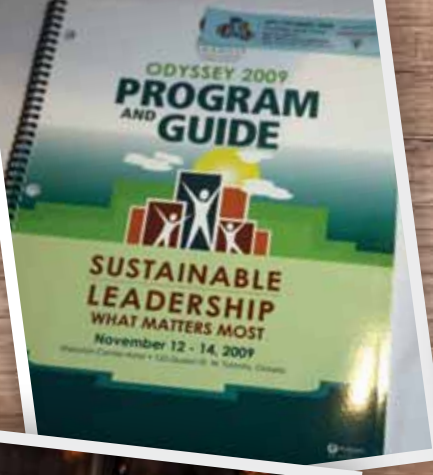
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# Looking Back, Leading For



In 1998, principals and vice-principals in Ontario took their professional future into their own hands by establishing the OPC. 20 years later, we celebrate the gains we have made in advocating on behalf of kids, great schools and our colleagues. Looking back through our files, we found many pictures that tell our story over that 20-year period. This collage represents the last 2 decades in review.



Looking Back, Leading Forward











# InSTEM

Empowering Indigenous youth through  
engineering and social change

Story and Photography by Paula Hall

Indigenous Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (InSTEM) is an Indigenous engineering design and social change project founded through a partnership between Actua (Canada's largest STEM outreach organization), University of Ottawa's Engineering Maker Mobile team and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB). Gloucester High School (GHS) in the OCDSB has been the host site of the InSTEM pilot program, which launched in fall 2016. Indigenous students from nearby Rideau High School (RHS) also participated in the program.



The pilot program has been delivered in two distinct formats. The first was held as four half-day, in-school field trips from November to December 2016 and was attended by a total of 18 students from both schools. The second project was expanded to offer students either six half-day, in-school field trips or registration for Current Aboriginal Issues in Canada (NDA3M), which included the InSTEM program as a required component of the course offering. Thirteen students were registered for the InSTEM/NDA3M course and an additional five students from RHS participated only on InSTEM program days. While the program was targeted at Indigenous students, non-Indigenous students were welcome to attend both pilots.

In the first program pilot in 2016, Actua and the Maker Mobile engineers worked with students to create a water filter prototype using 3D printers and the software program Tinkercad. The goal was to empower students to create social change by identifying an area of need for Indigenous communities, such as access to clean drinking water, and to use modern technology to help fix the problem. Students were engaged on both an academic and emotional level, and many were able to deeply connect through their own life experience or the experience of their relatives who live in Indigenous communities.



Students were engaged on both an **ACADEMIC** and **EMOTIONAL** level, and many were able to deeply connect through their own life experience or the experience of their relatives who live in Indigenous communities.

By the end of the program, students had designed and developed prototype filters that were able to purify water on a non-molecular level from an unclear water supply. Student voice was prioritized to guide the selection of InSTEM projects in the second pilot project offered in 2017, by allowing students to identify any Indigenous social change issue that resonated with them and to build a wearable technology prototype to support their cause. Whether or not students felt competent in developing wearable technology, all students were very passionate about creating positive community impact for a social issue they identified as significant.

Students designed fascinating projects that included 3D printed helpline bracelets to support Indigenous people who were suffering



Students were successful in identifying **SOCIAL ISSUES** that impacted Indigenous people and communities, and with the help of the project team, come up with **TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS** to support the issue they identified.



‘car seat,’ explaining the science behind how it worked to keep babies safe and protected during travel. Having honored members of the Indigenous community working with students directly on their STEM projects allowed for some very powerful moments in the program, where the learning impact would be nearly impossible to measure unless you were in the room to observe the deep, authentic connections.

#### **Program Considerations and Challenges**

The program has come with some very interesting considerations and challenges due to the nature of offering targeted Indigenous programming at a public high school. The most notable challenges have included the process for the identification of Indigenous students, the initial low participation rate, student lack of confidence and/or interest in STEM areas and the impact of time missed from regular classes in order for students to participate in the program. InSTEM program outreach had to be shared through PA announcements and regular communication channels, as there is no formal mechanism for identifying Indigenous students in our schools.

Although the Ontario government has a voluntary Aboriginal student self-identification process, this information is only to be used by school boards and the Ministry to provide for programming opportunities for Indigenous students. The self-identification data collected is not to be used by individual schools to connect with Indigenous students and families.

Stemming from this, another consideration that had to be addressed was the low number

from depression and a website project developed to provide Indigenous women confined in human trafficking with resources and supports to help them escape from trafficking and establish safe housing and employment opportunities. Students were successful in identifying social issues that impacted Indigenous people and communities, and with the help of the project team, come up with technological solutions to support the issue they identified. Kianna, a student at GHS and an InSTEM participant noted that, “This program helped me understand and become passionate about different problems that we Indigenous people face. The course helped me think of solutions for how to solve these problems using technology in an interesting and fun way.”

What made this program different from any other socially-conscious science project was the inclusion of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers (TKKs) who participated on each project day, for both pilot projects. The Elders and TKKs provided traditional land and cultural teachings in tandem with westernized science concepts so students could receive culturally significant knowledge to help them connect and enhance their understanding of STEM to their Indigenous culture.

For example, one TKK presented a Papoose, which is a traditional Indigenous baby carrier that can be worn on the back or placed on the ground to be used as a cradle for the baby. The TKK declared this traditional artifact to be the first prototype of what we know today as the



The Elders and TKKs provided **TRADITIONAL LAND AND CULTURAL TEACHINGS** in tandem with **WESTERNIZED SCIENCE CONCEPTS** so students could receive culturally significant knowledge to help them connect and enhance their understanding of STEM to their Indigenous culture.

program supports in mathematics. Also honouring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, InSTEM helps Indigenous communities move forward by providing culturally relevant Indigenous programming. Although the

program is still developing, the benefit to students, staff and the school community seem to be far more significant than anticipated. Most impressively, it is one of the few initiatives that has seamlessly motivated all partners to come together to deliver a program that can genuinely benefit Indigenous students while including and honouring Indigenous Elders and TKKs in our community. ▲

of Indigenous students who initially signed up for InSTEM. To enhance the experience for Indigenous students and to boost numbers, we encouraged all Indigenous students to invite a friend to take part in the program (the friend could be Indigenous or non-Indigenous). The area of STEM in and of itself also proved to be a participation barrier for some students, as they stated that they were not interested in science, technology, engineering or math, and many shared that they did not feel competent in those subject areas.

InSTEM has sparked a significant and committed community partnership that is dedicated to supporting Indigenous youth in our school district. The program has given students the opportunity to consider pursuing careers in STEM fields while understanding the traditional cultural significance

Paula Hall is a Vice-principal at Gloucester High School, Ottawa-Carleton DSB. Paula designed and taught InSTEM/NDA3M in spring 2017 and is a co-recipient of the 2017 Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's Innovation Award for her leadership on the InSTEM project. She is a member of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation.

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The InSTEM program will be presented at the OPC LeadON20 Anniversary Forum in April 2018. See [www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca) for more details.

Hosting the program during the school day and within the school setting had an impact on student participation. Students felt that the half-day sessions removed them from important class work, and after each program day they were falling behind on school assignments. Being in the school library on program days resulted in attrition if students had a test or presentation in the same time frame. They tried to balance InSTEM commitment with class participation, resulting in missing important parts of the cultural teachings and prototype development in the program.

#### Concluding Thoughts

Participating in the InSTEM program required very little hesitation, especially at a time where Ontario students are in need of additional

**OPC Register**  
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# EQUITY

An ongoing responsibility for school leaders

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By Protective Services Team

Illustration by Kelly Schykulski

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When educators from Ontario travel the world, they are often asked, “How do you make it work?” Others try to understand how we can appear so harmonious from the outside, while being so diverse. For those of us who work in public education, we know that the work that has been done in equity has been extensive. One reason that we are world leaders on the topic is because we recognize that the work is never done.

We understand principals and vice-principals are charged with

the responsibility of creating and supporting school cultures that are inclusive and allow our students to reach their full potential.

In the past, school leaders responded to intolerant or hurtful acts and/or comments appropriately. It is the job of administrators to make it clear that those acts and words are not tolerated by their school culture. Leaders must do their best to care for those who have been marginalized by acts of intolerance, while at the same time ensuring that the actions do not occur again.

Today, school leaders are being asked to do even more in their efforts to lead schools that are truly equitable in their opportunities and cultures. Principals and vice-principals are expected to push themselves and their staff to explore their personal biases and explore systemic racism that may exist in their schools. This is a much deeper conversation than many are used to, and can make us feel uncomfortable and ill-prepared. School leaders are concerned about saying the wrong things in a staff discussion and being judged as racist or insensitive.

Principals and vice-principals will be expected to lead their staff on this journey, and some boards have been very direct by requiring administrators to report to their Superintendents how they are embracing this challenge with their staff, and how they will evaluate whether they are successful.

In this article we hope to give school leaders some advice that allows them to be more confident as they move forward with this endeavour.

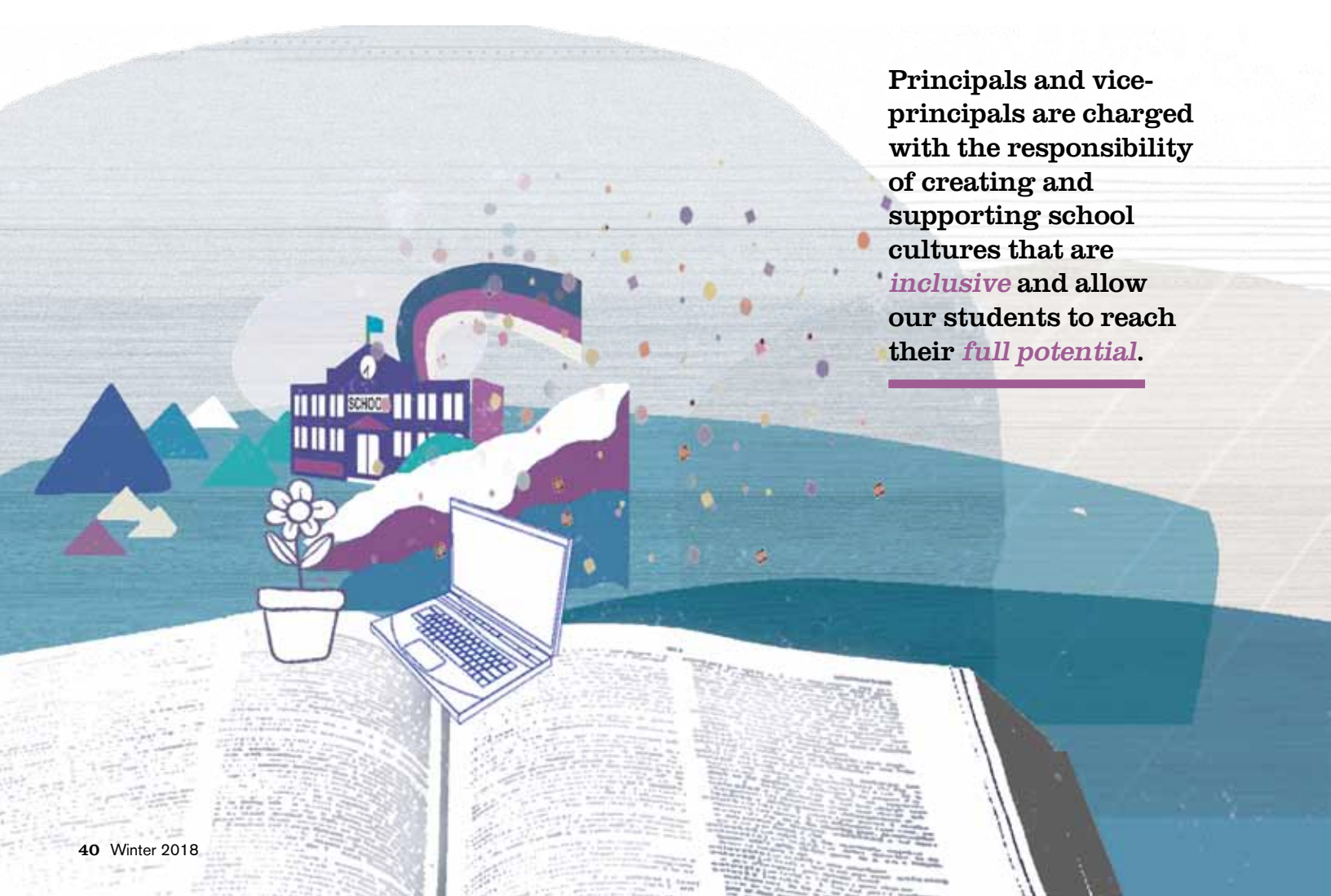
#### Legal Framework for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Ontario Schools

School leaders have always understood that it is part of their scope of responsibilities to ensure that statutory obligations and requirements relating to equity, diversity and inclusion are executed and practiced in schools. School boards are ultimately governed under the supremacy of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which forms part of

the Canadian *Constitution Act*. The *Charter* provides protected freedoms to individuals, inclusive of freedom of religion, beliefs and equal protection and benefit from the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age and mental or physical disability. As school boards fall under provincial jurisdiction, the Ontario *Human Rights Code* also applies to the role that educators play in ensuring schools are free from various forms of discrimination. The Ontario *Human Rights Code* expands the grounds under which an individual has the right to equal treatment with respect to services (i.e., delivering education), goods (i.e., teaching materials) and facilities (i.e., school buildings) without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability and/or receipt of public assistance.

Specifically relating to the operations of schools, administrators have also been accountable for ensuring that disability accommodations are made for staff, students, parents and members of the school community through the obligations set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, which provides a comprehensive set of accessibility standards, known as the Integrated Accessibility Standards, to which school boards must follow when accommodating individuals with disabilities.

**Principals and vice-principals are charged with the responsibility of creating and supporting school cultures that are *inclusive* and allow our students to reach their *full potential*.**







### Personal Bias

Before one can ask a staff member to explore what personal biases they bring to their work, that individual needs to explore their own internal biases. This is not easy for a public educator, since we are all expected to be tolerant and open minded. People fear openly admitting bias may lead to them being labelled as racist and outing the school leader in a situation in which they have to answer to others about beliefs.

Despite this fear, a leader needs to model this exploration, knowing that staff will also be very nervous about sharing their feelings and growth with others. School leaders should phrase their understanding as positive growth, using statements such as the following:

*"I will not assume that a student does not have the chance to go to university just because they live in low income housing."*

*"I can't easily understand how a racialized group of students may not see the opportunities we offer as accessible and welcoming."*

*"I may not be equitable in how I see student behaviour as disruptive as I may have a bias about how a good kid vs. a bad kid looks, dresses, speaks etc."*

*"I know that I have had positive experiences in education as a student partly because I come from a place of privilege where all opportunities were open for me, and I was supported whenever I had a concern."*

In sharing with others that you yourself are exploring these issues, you admit we all have biases, which demonstrates growth. This is particularly true if you are expressing a desire to improve and know that the position is not one that you are arguing to maintain.

### Safe Place

A school leader is responsible to create a safe space when taking on the challenge of pushing staff to grow and explore. Principals must be careful in today's world of increased sensitivity to harassment that they are allowing others a chance to feel safe and set the conditions for everyone to move forward together.

School leaders should be overt and open in stating their intent to create safe spaces. People should be asked for their input around what a safe space means. Rules can be collaboratively developed, allowing for open dialogue and a chance for all to give input.

Some may feel uncomfortable by issues, and it is reasonable for them to be asked to explore ways we can all serve students better. Open

**Before one can ask a staff member to explore what personal biases they bring to their work, an individual needs to explore their own internal biases.**

invitations allowing people to talk about their concerns and feelings at the outset will help staff know that the principal is supportive and understands the difficult emotions that these topics may expose.

Many will struggle with guilt when they are asked to understand that there are students who do not feel they are worthy of opportunities because they belong to a marginalized segment of the population. It is often the most tolerant individuals who struggle with the concept that someone could feel this way about their class or school. However, when we understand that so many factors have contributed to this internalized negative self-image, we realize guilt is not a constructive emotion on its own. Principals will be expected to help move staff to the place of action to change a student's negative perception of self.

A leader must monitor this safe place, allowing positive norms to develop, and must respond to behaviours that could make others feel unsafe in sharing and exploring their biases. People need to understand that it is not important where they are on the equity continuum, but rather that they are willing to move. Of course, it may be the case that an individual may express thoughts or beliefs that have to be responded to, and this will greatly test leadership. How to deal with this will be a challenge, but can be handled in a way that allows the person to grow and move forward while still honouring the notion of safe space. It should be noted that the obligation to join in this exploration is not optional for staff members. Despite being uncomfortable, we all have an obligation to participate.

### Understand Systemic Racism

Systemic racism by definition implies that imbedded in our systems and practices, discrimination exists. It means that by maintaining these systems of order, we are disenfranchising many and putting them at a disadvantage. Schools and boards must be willing and open to explore the existence of these realities in their systems or they can be in danger of not being respectful of others' human rights. It would be inaccurate and irresponsible to assume that there is no systematic racism in schools and boards.

It may be very difficult for some to see how the systems create advantage for some and hurt others as it often is not the intention of an individual to do so. People will be following what they believe would be fair practices and are not aware that there are some who are limited in opportunity.

Schools have the responsibility to explore the question and do their best to challenge these conditions. It should be expected that this conversation will be a difficult one, and that solutions are often complex and hard to find. School leaders are expected to do their best in a reasonable way.

For example, does the student leadership in a school truly represent the diversity in the student population? One must be sure the processes that select student leadership candidates are fair to all and not inherently biased. Even if a school feels that their processes are fair, they can't ignore the lack of representation of segments of the student population. Perhaps groups of students do not see themselves in those roles. If that is the case, the school needs to try and do what it can to change that perception.

That change can come in many forms. While efforts should be immediate, results may take time to achieve. In the case of student council elections, it



**Systemic racism by definition implies that embedded in our systems and practices, *discrimination exists.***

could take three years to reach a point where the council is truly representative. However, there should be markers and yearly progress that can be monitored. Perhaps students in grade 9 are asked to take on smaller leadership roles and then as time goes on they are encouraged to run for student council. Workshops for public speaking could be offered to students to help them get past their fears that may hold them back from running. Those workshops can be offered to every student to be equitable. Move from a place of blame and focus the conversation on solutions. It is important that these conversations engage many voices, particularly the student voice.

Principals will be asked to develop plans and goals in the area of equity. It is our hope that these goals can be developed at the school level as well as the system level. Schools that collaborate to examine their systems for bias should be able to define for themselves reasonable goals with timelines to allow for real shifts in culture.

The debate about whether applied classes should exist at the grade 9 level is front and centre. While boards will continue to wrestle with that debate, school leaders need to accept that the data is clear that a disproportionate number of students from racialized backgrounds make up our applied classes. A school may come up with a variety of different solutions, but cannot escape the reality that a problem exists.

For some that may mean doing a better job of recommending who should take academic classes, moving students to academic in proactive initiatives or perhaps not offering applied classes in all or parts of grade 9. Solutions will vary, but before they can be found, principals must lead schools to accept that systemic biases exist and that it is the responsibility of schools to search for and try and remove them.


**Conclusion**

Principals and vice-principals have great responsibilities during a time when issues of discrimination need to be challenged. You are encouraged to ask for help and connect with colleagues to share best practices to help get to the other side.

It should be remembered that as we continue to be world leaders on these issues, we

do so through hard work and leadership. No one will be working harder than our principals and vice-principals, and it will be the work that will make the biggest difference in the lives of the students who need us the most. ▲

✉ asayed@principals.ca



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# Mark Your Calendar

## LeadON20 Forum

Looking Back, Leading Forward  
April 18 -19, 2018  
Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel

## Principal's Development Course (PDC)

### March 26 - April 30

Module 11 - Leading the Special Education Program

Module 6 - Environmental Eco Justice Leadership

**Registration Deadline: March 12**

### April 30 - June 4

Module 2 - Pedagogical Leadership

Module 10 - Supporting LGBTQ in Your School

**Registration Deadline: April 16**

## Principal's Qualification Program (PQP)

Spring Part I and II

Saturday (8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.) &  
Sunday (8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.)

March 24-25, April 7-8, April 21-22,

May 5-6, May 26-27, June 9-10

**Registration Deadline: March 3, 2018**

## Principal's Qualification Program (PQP)

Spring Part I and II

Wednesday (5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.) &  
Saturday (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

March 21 & 24, April 4 & 7,

April 18 & 21, May 2 & 5, May 23 & 26,

June 6 & 9

**Registration Deadline: March 3, 2018**

## Emerging Leader

### Development Program

#### March 3 to 10

Module 3 - Exploring Your Equity Stance

**Registration Deadline:**

**February 26, 2018**

For more information on the events and courses listed, visit [www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca) or email [elc@principals.ca](mailto:elc@principals.ca)

## And the winner is...

Thank you again to everyone who encouraged their students to submit a logo design for our **LeadON20 Forum** this April. The committee reviewed the 61 designs that were submitted.



Congratulations to Sofia, a grade 11 student from John Fraser Secondary School in the Peel DSB, whose logo was selected as our official Forum logo!

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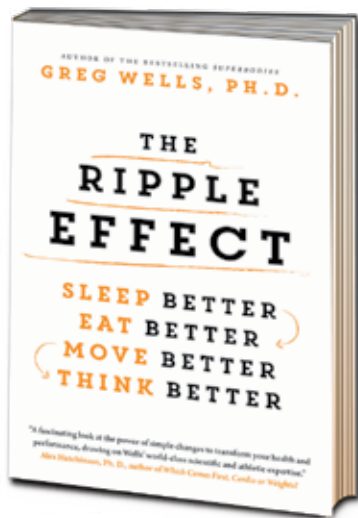
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## The Ripple Effect – Practical tips to improve your life

By Dr. Greg Wells  
HarperCollins Canada, 2017  
ISBN: 9781443436946  
Reviewed by Heather Highet

Sleep better, eat better, move better, think better is a brilliant mantra for anyone looking to make real improvements in all areas of their life. In *The Ripple Effect*, Dr. Greg Wells provides the specific ways in which you can make it happen.

He makes explicit the real and crucial connection between these four key actions, offering sensible and practical strategies for improving each of these areas in your life.

The image conjured up by the title of this book is effective. Once you realize that improvement in your life is attainable through small incremental changes in your daily routines, the 1 per cent tips that Dr. Wells provides are invaluable. These tips are scattered throughout the book, supported with current scientific research and the specific real-life journey to success of many high-performing athletes.

While not all of us have aspirations of being high performing athletes, many of us have aspirations to perform better in our personal and professional lives. The ideas, strategies and tools provided in *The Ripple Effect* are accessible to everyone. The 1 per

cent tips are just that – small doable changes you can begin to make today.

The tips are highlighted for quick reference and offer specific how-to details, from super healthy foods, to relaxation and meditation techniques, to creating the conditions that work for you for optimal performance.

*The Ripple Effect* is a great mix of research-based science behind being healthy and performing at your best, to real stories of exceptional people who achieved this through many of the tools and strategies described, to concrete ways to reach your goals. It serves as a principle for guiding you, wherever you are and whatever your exceptional is.

Greg offers sensible ways to ensure that we focus on what is really important in the face of the myriad of distractions in our busy world. The narrative in the book provides an entry point for

all stages or places you find yourself in life. It is as relevant to those of us in high-power jobs, as it is for those in crisis and ready for a change, or for those seeking to continuously improve their mental and physical functioning. Greg's mantra of sleep better, eat better, move better, think better is a means not only to ensure good mental health, but to ward off poor mental health and other ailments on the rise in society today.

The keys to sleeping, eating, moving and thinking better will have an impact on your life. After reading *The Ripple Effect*, and experimenting with some of the strategies and tools it provides, it is evident that living better, achieving more and being happier, is attainable and within our capabilities. As a principal of a public high school in Ontario, this message could not have come at a better time; I am already sleeping better and realizing many benefits from his 1 per cent tips. ▲

Heather Highet is a principal at Bayridge Secondary School in the Limestone DSB.

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**i**  
Interested in  
writing a review  
for the OPC Register?  
Email Editor  
Peggy Sweeney at  
[psweeney@principals.ca](mailto:psweeney@principals.ca)

# Saying Goodbye

I began my career in education 52 years ago, working as a teacher, guidance counsellor, vice-principal, principal, local union president and provincial union staff officer. During those years, I had the good fortune to work with

many fabulously talented colleagues who taught me so much about our profession. The opportunity to work with students and families is what drew me to a career in education and allowed me to develop my passion for public education, politics, fairness and equity.

In 1998, the Ontario government decided to make many momentous changes to the public education system. One was to remove principals and vice-principals from the teacher unions. This change was extremely significant to those of us in the role at the time. Yet despite the uncertainty this new reality posed, it also offered a unique opportunity to build an organization that could focus on the needs of school leaders, as well as students.

With our removal from the federations, there was a great abyss facing us. Some individuals, on their own, with no financial or other support, joined together and worked across the province to form a professional association to fill this gap in support. Out of that volunteer work, in the public system, the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) was formed.

With the fledgling OPC taking baby steps towards forming a fully functioning professional association, a small staff was hired to get the organization off the ground. Not a natural

risk taker myself but one who loves a challenge, I applied for and was lucky enough to get a job as the first Protective Services Consultant.

My first day in 1999 was a stark reminder of what it was going to mean to build an organization from scratch. I walked into a rented corner of a printing warehouse with desks held together with tape, no pens, paper, computer or Internet. In a small area with space heaters, a folding card table and a mini fridge, I promised myself that I would give this new organization two years, and here I am finally leaving after 19.

There were no policies, procedures or long-standing traditions to follow. We had to build a new organization from the ground up. The progress made in those years is nothing short of amazing. The OPC has succeeded in becoming a world-renowned association that supports its Members, while at the same time acting in the best interests of students and public education. We offer professional advice and support, professional learning opportunities, *The Register*, a website and government advocacy, just to name a few. Our reputation has also grown across the world through our subsidiary, International School Leadership (ISL). We have been able



to move forward the charter rights of principals and vice-principals in terms of your right to collectively negotiate your terms and conditions of employment, both locally and provincially. It has been no mean feat to move these charter rights forward and develop a “made for management approach.”

To put the OPC's success into perspective, I would point out that teacher unions have had almost 100 years to build their organizations as well as gain legal rights to advocate for their members. It is quite miraculous that we have come so far in just 20 years.

The success of any organization is due in large part to the people. It is certainly the people who have kept me here for 19 years. I have been so privileged to work with an amazing staff, Executives and Provincial Councils, and of course, our Members!

Goodbye and thank you OPC! ▲

---

Faye Drennan



# #LeadON20

April 18-19, 2018  
Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel  
Toronto, Canada

## Looking Back, Leading Forward 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Announcing  
our Keynote  
Speakers



**Simon Breakspear**  
Learning Labs



**Carol Campbell**  
OISE/UT



**Candy Palmater**  
The Candy Show



**Niigaan Sinclair**  
University of Manitoba



**Greg Wells**  
University of Toronto

Culturally Responsive Leadership • Is Your Job Too Dangerous?  
Collaborative Culture with Remote Staff and Students • Rethinking Resistance  
• Partnering for Innovative Change

Options include full-forum two-day  
registration or single-day registration.

Personalize your LeadON experience!  
All **breakout sessions** are **drop-in**,  
no enrolment required!

Access **free TVO livestreaming** of  
some sessions by registering with  
TeachOntario today!

**TeachOntario**  
powered by **tvo**

All-star discussion panel featuring...



**Ken Leithwood**  
OISE/UT



**Avis Glaze**  
Edu-quest Int. Inc.



**Michael Fullan O.C.**  
OISE/UT

For further details and to register visit [www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca)

# Your road to

## RETIREMENT

### 5-15 YEARS

before you retire

Attend one of RTO/ERO's Retirement Planning Workshops

[rto-ero.org/  
rpw-schedule-list](http://rto-ero.org/rpw-schedule-list)

### 1-5 YEARS

before you retire

Begin your transition into retirement. Connect with retired colleagues and join RTO/ERO.

### 6 MONTHS

before you retire

Connect with your financial planner and look into your pension. Consider your insurance needs:  
[rto-ero.org/  
group-insurance-plans](http://rto-ero.org/group-insurance-plans)

### 60 DAYS

before you retire

Apply for RTO/ERO membership and group insurance.

## ★ RETIREMENT ★

### RELAX!

You've earned it.

Depuis 1968

**RTO**  
**ERO**

Since 1968



Learn more about retirement planning  
[rto-ero.org/retirement-planning](http://rto-ero.org/retirement-planning)



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