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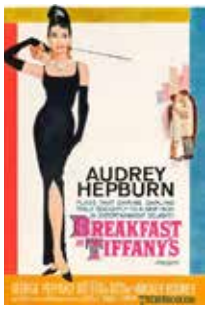

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Improving the School Community

Kyran Dwyer
President, Canadian Association of Principals

The CAP Fall meetings were very productive and worthwhile. Being in Ottawa and attending the Remembrance Day Ceremony is very touching. It makes one reflect on our great country and helps us realize the impact leaders have. Principals and assistant principals work hard every day with leaders not only present day ones but also our future leaders. Much of the discussion at our meetings was about supporting school administrators in the work they do each day. Working with partner organizations across Canada on research that impacts the work and personal lives of principals and assistant principals is an important focus for CAP.

CAP Conference 2018 in St. John's, NL is just five months away. The theme Navigating Uncharted Waters: Keeping an Even Keel promises to be a quality learning opportunity. (http://www.capnl2018.ca/) The keynotes all come with a wide array of leadership experiences and will challenge all of us to be mindful of the very important role we play in the lives of our students and families. The breakout sessions will also provide learning experiences that we can tailor to work in our own schools and local contexts. The reconnecting with old friends and making new ones will help broaden your network to build your capacity as a leader. I hope to see many of you in St. John's to learn together and share our experiences.

As you go about your work each day in supporting your students please remember that social and emotional learning is equally as important as academic learning. Every time you smile, shake a hand, give a pat on the back or say hello you are making a huge difference in a student's life.

I want to thank each principal, assistant principal and school leader for the important work you do. I want to wish you, your staff and your students a joyful winter filled with lots of laughter and learning.

Yours in Education,

Kyran Dwyer

Canadian Association of Principals
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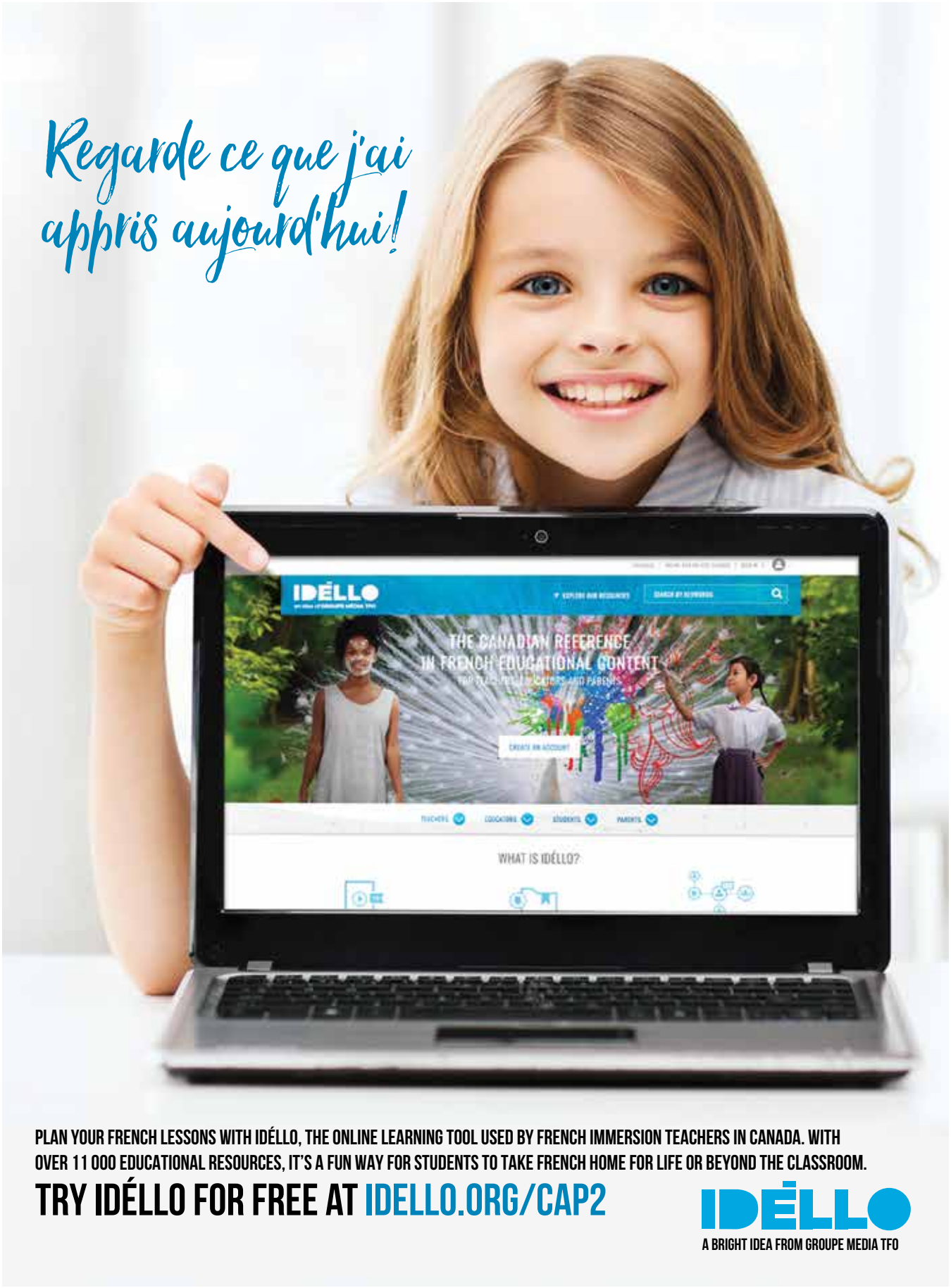
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Terry MacIsaac
Editor, CAP Journal

Greetings!

I hope that everyone had a peaceful and relaxing holiday and are now into their winter term. It seems like yesterday that we were beginning our school year and now administrators are beginning to consider planning for next year, while still running their building each day!

This journal topic of 'Student Safety and Security' can be explored in many ways. As administrators, we are tasked each day with ensuring the safety of our students. In today's world, this is no easy task with the many issues that can hamper this, drugs, violence, bullying, social media, just to name a few. Many of these topics have been explored in the articles inside this journal.

The role of the administrator has not changed much in many years; ensure student learning while maintaining student safety and security. The challenges involved in this however, continue to evolve daily. Gone are the days when a physical fight was the main cause of concern by administrators, and now it has evolved to include everything from verbal bullying or exclusion, cyber taunting, drugs, weapons and so on as issues we have to deal with.

I would like to thank all contributors to this journal. Without people taking the time to share their expertise on topics, our journal wouldn't exist. If you haven't submitted an article before, or in a long time, please consider doing so for future issues.

Sincerely,

Terry MacIsaac
Eastern VP, CAP

The Pill

> *"Abuse of these psychotherapeutic drugs, in their many forms, can lead to **respiratory depression**, **comas**, **apnea** or **death**."*

When we think of drugs in school, we might first think of groups of slackers standing in dimly-lit alleys, wafting green-tinged smoke and debating whether Yoshi is the name of the creature or the name of its species.

Problem

By **Doug Checkley**, with **Dr. Jeffrey MacCormack**

Prescription Drug *Misuse & Abuse* Amongst Teens

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Some drug use, like pot smoking, may be identified through behavioural markers or particular smells, but over-the-counter pill usage does not fall into easily recognized characteristics. In fact, the problem with pills is that they can be shared and consumed quite literally in plain view of educators and administrators. It is widely known that students are being medicated, for a variety of conditions, more often now than when we were in school (Netemeyer, Burton, Delaney, & Hijjawi, 2015). What is less known how the proliferation of prescription pills has fueled a market for easy access in our schools.

Prescription pill use is a problem. One in 20 Canadian students in grades 7-12 admit to abusing prescription drugs. It sits as the third most commonly abused substance, tied with synthetic cannabinoids, and only behind cannabis, 17%, and alcohol, 40% (Government of Canada, 2017). Students are aware, that where some medications can be used to help students focus, reduce anxiety, or combat depression, they can also be abused to "get high."

Pill Problem

Here's the problem: students don't always take the pills that they are supposed to take. In fact, medications are more commonly discontinued abruptly by adolescents than adults, and often without the student notifying their parents or prescribing physicians (Hosenbocus & Chahal, 2011). Students may not tell their parents or trusted adults when they discontinue their prescribed medications (such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors and psychostimulants) because they don't always like how the drugs make them feel. These adverse physiological or psychological effects (Charach & Fernandez, 2013; Lars Vedel, Hanne Vibe, Koen, & Per, 2005) may be difficult for adolescents to understand and describe. When students do not take their medication, the daily doses from parents can begin to stockpile in lockers.

Motivated either by a desire to get rid of the evidence or by some entrepreneurial spirit, students can sell pills quite discretely at school. The process of selling, trading, or sharing pills is known as diversion (Elliott, Souder, Privette, & Richardson, 2008, p. 19). Diverted pills can ingested, but can also be crushed and snorted to quicken the effects. Students are not as aware of the dangers of prescription drug use as they are of the dangers of illicit drug use (Netemeyer et al., 2015). Abuse of these psychotherapeutic drugs, in their many forms, can lead to respiratory depression, comas, apnea or death. Therefore, this increase in abuse by adolescents is an obvious concern for schools and school administrators.

In my own experience as a high school administrator this can lead to difficult questions. For example, how can administrators justify responding to pill use without evidence? Unlike students who are abusing marijuana and alcohol, students abusing a focusing medication can come up with plausible and detailed explanations during an unwanted trip to the office. What if the parents side with their student? Additionally, how does one responsibly allow that student to return to class, or even worse travel home, or drive, at the end of the day if intoxication, or an overdose, could be a concern?

The pills are small and can be easily hidden and distributed. It can even happen within classrooms, as students are aware that these pills can fit inside of pens: a student, the customer, asks to borrow a pen; the distributer asks for $5 for the pen, maybe even claiming it will be returned with the return of the pen at the end of the day, the actual exchange takes place within the classroom directly in front of the teacher. In my own experience, I have found pills hidden inside of pens, hidden in the base of reusable coffee mugs and water bottles, and a hair brush. All objects that can be readily and openly passed between students.

The reality of prescription pill abuse in schools can be daunting, but what can we do?

First, be diligent! When searching students and lockers, be assiduous when examining artifacts, however mundane and school related. Pills are small and easy to hide.

Second, be a safe place! If students felt more comfortable talking to their parents about discontinuing their prescriptions, pills wouldn't be available for diversion in schools. It is important that there is someone at the school who is a safe place for students to share their anxieties and hesitations around drug protocols.

Third, be informative! While prescription pills can be extremely helpful for students who need them, those same pills can be dangerous for someone without a prescription. Students may not realize that recreational pill popping can lead to drops in dopamine levels, especially when combined with alcohol. ■

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Attending to Student Well-being:

Making a Case for Equity and Inclusion

By **Donna H. Swapp** and **Annette R. Walker**

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In Canada, schools are responsible for student safety and security in the day-to-day operationalization of teaching and learning.

This environment is particularly pervasive in Ontario, where a plethora of legislation and policies inform students' physical, mental, social, and academic health (Achieving Excellence, 2014; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014; PPM, 119). Irrespective of provincial jurisdiction, however, as chief managers of their buildings, school principals are accountable for the successful enactment of student safety policies. And, while Ontario is uniquely positioned to attract the most diverse student population, the province continues to grapple with issues regarding access, opportunity, and outcome of learning for all groups of students. In this article, we argue that student well-being is an undergirding component of student safety and security; that the diversity of Ontario classrooms demands a commitment to equity and inclusion; and, that principals play a key role in leading equitable and inclusive school practices.

To say that "principals face new challenges everyday" is an understatement. In the seven years spanning our work with school leaders across Ontario, we have lost track of the number of times principals and vice principals indicated that they spend large chunks of their work days attending to student safety and security. Bullying, and in this past decade or so – cyber-bullying, physical and sexual abuse, illegal drugs, physical altercations and threats to harm, and building maintenance, among other student safety and security responsibilities, significantly consume principals' work lives (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013; Swapp, 2012; Pollock, Murakami & Swapp, 2015; Pollock, Wang & Hauseman, 2015). Compounding the educational landscape on a national scale are recent and escalating world crises, threats to global food security, wars and other conflicts, natural disasters, and domestic and international terrorism. Mass migration is a most conspicuous consequence of these phenomena, and Ontario receives a disproportionately high number of immigrants and refugees, when compared to other provinces (Eggerton, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2016).

In fact, one in five Canadians was born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). This reality of Canada's diversity requires new and unconventional public responses, and while we acknowledge that principals are bombarded with work, we nevertheless see Ontario's changing dynamics as necessitating interventions on principals' part that are rooted in an understanding of, and commitment to, equity and inclusion in learning to ensure the overall well-being of the diverse students under their care.

Attending to Student Well-being

It is along these lines that we make our contribution to this CAP journal issue. We argue that student well-being is the foundational goal of student safety and security. We build on The World Health Organization's definition of wellness as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Student well-being, then, is defined as having a "positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that [students] feel when [their] cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 1). Ontario students must have their well-being attended to, irrespective of ethnicity or race, gender, sexuality, country of birth, or other characteristics. Global phenomena such as bullying, terrorism, wars, natural disasters, and physical and sexual abuse among others impact all students; some in obviously more direct ways than others. There are serious and often debilitating impacts on the mental, physical, social, and psychological lives of children, and school principals are uniquely positioned to identify and harness school practices to address this impact. The idea is to attend to all students' cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual development. In practice, this means promoting positive mental health, and creating safe, accepting, and healthy schools (Ontario Well-being Strategy for Education, 2016). We believe that in order to achieve well-being for all students, principals must first have an informed understanding of what equity and inclusion look like in practice, and then commit to leadership that promotes equity and inclusion in their schools.

What Do We Mean by Equity and Inclusion?

Equity is about being treated fairly, but not necessarily the same. It is a social justice aim that takes into account individuals' and/or groups' historical and persistent social, cultural, and academic inequalities and systemic discrimination in making educational decisions (Dei, 2008; James, 2012a, 2012b; Novak, Armstrong & Brown, 2014). To be fair to all students and ensure all students' well-being, then, it is necessary to account for, and correct, this context when planning and implementing teaching and learning practices across Ontario classrooms. Our emphasis on equity and inclusion focuses attention on groups of students who have hitherto not received the same educational access, opportunity and outcome as their peers in Ontario classrooms, whether due to gender identity, race, religion, sexuality, disability, or other needs or characteristics. Principals can build on the Ministry of Education's definition of equity: "a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences" (Ontario's Equity & Inclusive Education Strategy, 2013, p. np). Part of working towards equity and inclusion involves principals' aligning their instructional leadership practices with Ontario's four main goals of education are (i) achieving excellence;(ii) ensuring equity; (iii) supporting and promoting well-being; and, (iv) enhancing confidence in publicly funded education (Achieving Excellence, 2014; PPM 119). As is evident, two of these four goals speak specifically to equity and inclusion. When principals lead their schools in working towards reducing barriers to access education opportunities, more equitable learning outcomes can be fostered.

Inclusion goes hand in hand with equity and is better understood when juxtaposed against the term, exclusion. Inclusive school practices are "based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected" (PPM 119, p. 9). Further, Canada's inclusive education system is premised on the diversity of learners who come from different socio-economic and cultural background, and who attend schools that support their communities (Specht & Young, 2010). Inclusion then, emphasizes access, participation, and achievement of and for all students; it supports diversity; learners with different socio-economic and cultural histories see themselves reflected in the curriculum (Ryan, 2012; Ryan, Pollock & Antonelli, 2009; Specht & Young, 2010). For instance, there is evidence that disparity in student achievement is most prevalent among Indigenous and racialized/minoritized groups of students attending schools in vulnerable communities (Debassige, 2013: Dei, 2008; James & Turner, 2017). Principals must be knowledgeable of evidence-based data that speak to student diversity and equity and inclusion in learning in order to drive the efforts to improve the well-being of their students.

Conclusion

In this current educational climate in Ontario, principals must work harder, and differently, if they are to ensure the well-being of the students in their care. Practising inclusive leadership (Ryan, 2012), where all stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, and the community – particularly vulnerable communities – can engage in meaningful discussions on policy and program initiatives at the school level, is an important step. Principals can also commit to expanding their existing professional learning networks to benefit from the dialogue and input of a wide cross-section of stakeholders in brainstorming and initiating equitable and inclusive practices to address the well-being of all students in their care. Such leadership practices that are drenched in equity and inclusion require "a commitment to problematizing the status quo, examining issues from the lens of [students], and advocating for all students" (Swapp, 2017, p. 10, emphasis added). As Ontario educators, we strive to ensure all students realize their fullest potential, and to do that requires that we attend to systemic, social, and cultural deficiencies in our schools and classrooms. Principals who are committed to equity and inclusion are best poised to help achieve this vision. ■

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The idea of what constitutes a "safe" school has changed considerably over the previous two decades.

Nowhere is this change more evident than in educational policy. Ontario's Safe Schools Act (2000), for example, clearly focuses on reducing school violence and student substance abuse while increasing respect within the schools, especially respect for teachers and principals. It was thought at that time that accomplishing the goals of the Act would make our schools safe places. Policy makers now believe this is not enough. For example, Ontario's new proposed legislation, the Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13), widens the scope of what a safe environment is by advocating for the creation of an inclusive and positive school climate, characterized by healthy and respectful relationships throughout the entire school and in the wider community. Specific mention is made of raising awareness of anti-racism, mental health challenges, gender equity and gender identity and sexual orientation. Now, safety is not the absence of violence and substance abuse, but rather, the absence of discrimination and the acceptance of diversity in all its forms. This change in the concept of what a 'safe school' is has, and will continue to have, implications for school administrators who are expected to create the environment outlined in the policies.

chools Through r Wellness

By **Michael Savage** and **Vera Woloshyn**

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One way school principals can create an inclusive and positive school climate is to adopt and implement a framework that holistically addresses the wellness of all members of the school community including students, staff, teachers and the principals themselves. This framework involves considering everyone's overall self concept, including elements such as culture, social class, exposure to trauma, social and emotional contexts, and availability to learn, teach and lead (Mazur & Doran, 2010). A crucial component of the framework is the creation of multi-tiered, holistic systems of support that are simultaneously focused on promoting positive physical and mental health for all members of the school community, preventing social-emotional challenges for school members who may be at risk for them, and supporting interventions for those in the school community who are experiencing distress as a result of a physical or mental health challenge. Research has demonstrated this framework as the most promising model of promoting and maintaining school wellness (Kutash, Duchnorsk, & Lynn, 2006; Stephan, Sugai, Lever, & Connors, 2015; Short, Finn & Ferguson, 2017). It is important to note, however, that this framework must be nested within a much broader system of care that includes community and health-care organizations (Short, 2016). This will ensure support is provided for those school community members who need more intensive services than the schools themselves can deliver.

School principals have a critical role in establishing, implementing and maintaining the comprehensive wellness framework. Short et al. (2017) argue principals have three important, interconnected tasks they need to do in order to lead for wellness:

1. Establish the organizational conditions that are foundational to adopting a comprehensive wellness framework
2. Build Capacity
3. Support ongoing implementation. Details of each task follows.

Organizational Conditions

In order to implement a comprehensive wellness approach a commitment from the principal is required. This cannot just be a "one-off" reform initiative with short-term funding. It requires continuity across policies and practices in terms of dealing with issues like bullying, mental health challenges, appreciation for diversity, and suicide prevention. It involves a need for the principal to work toward a shared vision of wellness for all stakeholders and for the creation of a shared mission statement which can guide the framework (Whitley, 2010).

The creation of a Wellness Leadership Team, composed of both school and community-based members, who create both short and long-term goals, has been shown to be an important, and effective way to implement a wellness approach (Whitley, 2010). Principals need to be members of these teams and provide time for school community members to take part. The team would be responsible for creating a School Wellness Strategy and Action Plan.

It is also important that principals ensure that the wellness framework aligns with the overall school board plans, integrates into provincial initiatives, has clearly defined shared language so all school community members can understand things, involves meaningful collaboration with local community and health partners and consists of investments in evidence-based wellness interventions and programs (Short et al., 2017).

Build Capacity

While most school principals recognize the importance of Leading for Wellness in terms of their students' learning, academic achievement and overall health and well-being, many believe they are not prepared to provide support and leadership in this domain (Intercamhs and International Confederation of Principals (2009). As a result, there is a great need to build principals' capacity to Lead for Wellness. This includes building up principals' basic mental health literacy and having them identify and confront their own biases and prejudices. It also involves teaching principals self-care and wellness skills so they can model and promote these skills to their staff, students and parents (Short et al., 2017). Workshops, however, are not enough for principals, teachers, school staff or students. Whitley (2010) argues for real capacity-building to occur it requires a change in school culture and the development of professional learning communities where teachers and principals observe each others' wellness practices, discuss and reflect upon various approaches, and collaborate with other schools engaging in similar initiatives.

Principals also need to provide their teachers and staff with systematic professional learning around wellness and provide high-quality information about wellness and wellness-related topics, which includes where and how to access community-based services, to students, parents and staff (Short et al., 2017).

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Support On-going Implementation

Principals also have a role in the ongoing implementation of effective, evidence-based wellness initiatives, programs and interventions. This may involve providing technical, policy or financial assistance to support the initiation and maintenance of elements of the Wellness Strategy and Action Plan. It also involves collecting evidence that the initiatives that have been adopted are resulting in the desired outcomes. Providing more access to the schools, and creating more partnerships, with university researchers would allow for evidence of initiatives' efficacy to be collected and reported (Whitley, 2010).

Leading for Wellness offers an exciting opportunity for school principals to create safer schools where all community members are respected, their diversity appreciated, and their strengths celebrated. Adopting a holistic, comprehensive wellness framework has the added benefits of also increasing the quality of life and wellbeing of school community members, leading to increased academic achievement. Although not easy to adopt and implement, we believe today's principals are up to the challenge! ■

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Student-Teacher Relationships:

By **Pamela Adams, Carmen Mombourquette** and **Dan New**

A Foundation for High School Student Safety and Success

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A highly professional and specialized workforce, technological advancements, and increased global competition have prompted 21st Century high school reform characterized by personalized learning environments. Personalized learning has been a common theme throughout research on effective high school reform over the past decade. In Alberta, personalized learning has come to mean the alignment of learning and learning environments with students' individual strengths, passions, and interpersonal preferences (Alberta Education, 2009). This focus has given impetus to implementation of a High School Redesign Project in many schools across the province. This project is designed to increase student engagement, improve student achievement, and enhance teacher practice through the development of flexible and student-centered learning environments. Participating Redesign schools are exempt from the required 25 hours of classroom instruction per unit of course credit–also reffered to as Carnegie Units. With this flexibility, high schools are making changes to the structure of their classrooms, schedules, and instructional approaches to best suit the needs of learners (Alberta Education, 2014).

In this article we present the case study findings of one large rurban high school school as it implemented the tenets of high school redesign with a clear focus on building relationships. Their efforts led to an increased sense of student safety, belonging, and engagement and, in turn, improvements in student success.

Personalized Learning Structures Leading to Healthy and Positive Relationships

Eaton and Nelson (2007) outline how the flexible use of time and structure, in conjunction with relationship-building between students and teachers, allows schools to implement strategies that meet the individual needs of students and that foster personalization. In Redesign schools, one of the most common versions of this flexible time is a scheduled block of time for student advisory and individual student academic support, often referred to as "Flex Block." During this time, students are provided opportunities to make reasoned choices about their needs, both curricular and otherwise. For many Redesign schools, this flexible structure has resulted in dedicated time for students to pursue support for academic needs, as well as connect with peers and teachers beyond the traditional classroom setting. The intent of this flexible time is to increase students' levels of engagement and connectivity with their learning environments in order to develop cultures of safety and belonging. This culture is characterized by valuable relationships among teachers and students where fewer students are getting lost (McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010).

Relationships and Connections Through Redesign

Carol, the principal of North High School, described the importance of flexibility in developing strong relationships between students and teachers at her school. She affirmed that improved relationships lead to increased levels of student independence and resilience. Carol changed the social structure of the school as a result of the social-emotional challenges her students faced. She explained that immediately prior to becoming the principal, her school district had completed an international resiliency study; results indicated that students at her school were lacking in many of the skills of their peers. These results were analyzed in conjunction with informal research undertaken by the assistant principal, in which she surveyed staff and students about staff-student relationships. 80% of staff believed they were relating well to students whereas only 8% of students felt that they had a teacher to connect with and who would advocate for them. The discrepancies in the data lead the school leadership team to implement structures and processes that would connect teachers with all students. To accomplish this, the school changed their scheduling so that teachers and support staff members would be more readily available to network with students beyond regular curricular classroom time. Teachers, in particular, were assigned specific time to walk around the school and simply find students to connect with. During this scheduled time, teachers would do something as basic as sit down and talk to students, and by so doing start to build stronger informal student-teacher relationships in the school.

Carol described how, prior to this approach, "there was a chaotic feeling in the building… teachers felt their classes were too large they didn't have the time to connect with kids." Then, as change started to happen, Carol observed that a "settled feel" permeated the building. She concluded that these connections were a primary step in providing students with the capacity to be successful in a high school context. She also noted the various mental health needs of students and how some aspects of mental health went hand-in-hand increased resiliency skills.

North High School has a student population in excess of 1800. With relationships becoming a priority, there was a clear shift in mindset about teaching and learning. Even in this large school context, students report feeling more connected to the school staff, as well as their peers. In focus group interviews with a cross-section of students from the school, many described how they felt cared for and connected at school. Specifically, students perceived that their teachers had become advocates for both their learning and well-being. Students viewed teachers and staff as "regularly going above and beyond" and "supportive." These students also spoke about how their teachers seemed genuinely invested in helping them to be successful within and beyond their high school studies. They described how teachers regularly engaging in conversations that made students feel supported at school, regardless of what the students' personally identified goals might be. In some cases, students also applauded the guidance of teachers who supported them in making choices about how to pursue interpersonal challenges and academic goals. It was clear that these students had a sense that there was one or more caring adults in the building that were looking out for their well-being, safety, and success (Quint, 2006).

Of note in this particular case was the drastic shift taken by the school community within only two years of restructured focus on relationships within a flexible timetable. This school provides evidence that students' academic success remains clearly tied to their feeling of belonging, safety, and connectedness to teachers, support staff, and peers in school. Within a couple of years, this school saw improvements in the mental health of their students simply by making deliberate choices to build and foster caring relationships.

Relationships as a Foundation for Student Safety Leading to Student Success

The value of developing healthy and productive relationships as a key strategy to promote high school student success was central to the findings of this study. A majority of participants conveyed the importance of building teacher-student and student-student relationships to create the connectivity, sense of belonging, and ownership that was foundational to learning and academic achievement. McClure et al. (2010) contends that these positive relationships are a hallmark of personalized reform within high schools, and they cite "growing evidence that indicates greater personalization—improved, trusting relationships particularly among teachers and students—are able to raise students' expectations for themselves and teachers' expectations for students" (p. 4). It is clear from this one case study, and research already undertaken in the field, that other high schools on their journey of reform would be well-served by constructing opportunities and conditions in which student relationships can flourish. When students feel safe and connected to their schools, academic success and student achievement will follow. ■

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CAP 150
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About The CAP 150 Contest

In 2017, Canada celebrates its 150th birthday with a proud history of political, social and economic progress. While the social and political elements are essential to a country's quality of life, the deeper question as Canadians look ahead to the next 50 years is related to economic security and opportunity. What continues to bind us? No matter what political view, racial background or social status, everyone needs commerce in one form or another to put food on the table and provide a better life for their family. Canada has been a land of opportunity and always strived toward ensuring equality and inclusiveness. The book, "Everybody's Business" will capture the perspectives and vision of Canadians in relation to economic growth and vision for the next 50 years and provide a framework for growth and action. The research for this book is in partnership with the Rotman School of Management and Canadian leaders who are passionate about Canada and its future growth. The Canadian Association of Principals is proud to partner with the authors to engage high school students to share their thoughts as the future leaders of our great country! The findings from the submitted essays will be included in the book publication, "Everybody's Business". All essays will contribute to the voices of Canadians who will lead the growth and development of Canada for the next 50 years.

Immigrants:
The Next Driving Force Behind Our Economy

Canada is one of the most multicultural and diverse countries across the world. Canadians take pride in accepting people of different cultures and deepening our diversity – it is what unites us all as one.

Many people here, such as my parents, immigrate to Canada in hopes of a better life and opportunities for their children. However, a fact almost always forgotten, is the vital role that immigrants plays in the Canadian economy. They offer enormous potential for the Canadian economy to grow and flourish. People from a country like my own, Sri Lanka, who immigrate to Canada often aspire to be entrepreneurs here. However, due to their cultural restrictions, the skillsets that immigrants bear with them when they set foot on foreign land such as Canada, are not transferable into the business world of the 21st century. As a result, countries such as Canada, are losing out on potential entrepreneurs contributing to the Canadian economy.

> “They have an **unwavering courage** to start a business, and to grow it from the ground up. It is this **exact spirit** that **propels our economy forward.**”

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Often times, the nations that people originate from before immigrating to Canada, have cultural expectations that force them into taking on certain labour roles and positions. My grandfather was a successful entrepreneur himself in Sri Lanka, who owned a rice mill in a small town. As a small business owner, he poured his heart and soul into helping grow his business into something much bigger than he could imagine. Today, he has sold that business and has settled in Canada. However, in 1992, he was unemployed in Canada for a long period of time. The skills he harvested from working and creating his rice mill business were not useful in Canada, because Canadians import their rice from other nations. He, like many other immigrants were at a large disadvantage. Whether you were a tea leaf harvester in the mountainous regions of China, a farmer in the coffee industry of Brazil, or a rice mill owner in Sri Lanka like my grandfather, the skills that you sharpened for years in your home country were of little use to you in Canada.

The traditional economies where many Canadian immigrants come from do not facilitate a development of the typical skills needed in a modern, technology-based country like Canada. However, something that most of these immigrants have in common from their previous homeland is their entrepreneurial spirit. They have an unwavering courage to start a business, and to grow it from the ground up. It is this exact spirit that propels our economy forward. These immigrants have the right mindset, the courage, and skills to manage small businesses like they have been doing back home for decades. Instead of allowing these immigrants to further develop their passion and talent, our job market forces these should-be entrepreneurs to take on low-level labor positions such as factory or maintenance work in an effort to make ends meet.

As citizens, we should not sit back and continue to watch as our economy fails to captivate the full potential of every individual. The Government of Canada should aim to help these immigrants become the small business owners that they have the potential to be. There needs to better incentives for immigrants who were entrepreneurs once back home, to continue their legacy here on Canadian soil. Thus, the Government of Canada should work to establish policies and new initiatives that ensure the success of immigrant entrepreneurs.

There are several reasons why many of these immigrant entrepreneurs choose to take on jobs in Canada that may not have been hoping for. One of the common entry barriers for immigrants entering entrepreneurship is the lack of skill and fear of not being able to manage their business effectively. The Government of Canada can help remove this obstacle by offering educational workshops to help immigrants use their current skills in being entrepreneurs, in teaching these people about the fundamentals behind managing businesses in Canada. For example, educating them on labour laws and effective budgeting are important skills that every entrepreneur should be fundamentally aware about. Many of these immigrant entrepreneurs have the courage and spirit - this knowledge will help them and their small businesses succeed.

Another common entry barrier for immigrant entrepreneurs is funding to start up a business. Many of these immigrants have already spent a large portion of their savings in trying to start a new life in Canada, working hard to achieve the quality of life that many Canadians are fortunate enough to have today. As a result, many of these former entrepreneurs do not have the money to continue what they started back home. Thus, the Government of Canada and/or major financial institutions of Canada should extend affordable credit to these should-be entrepreneurs, to help them start up. Offering low interest bank loans to help them start off with the necessary funding would be a vital part to helping these individuals set forth.

Taking these small yet necessary steps is one way to build a bridge for this existing gap. As a society, we can work to help future generations of immigrants with entrepreneurial spirit start off on the right foot, because they are soon going to be the largest driving force behind our massive economy. ■

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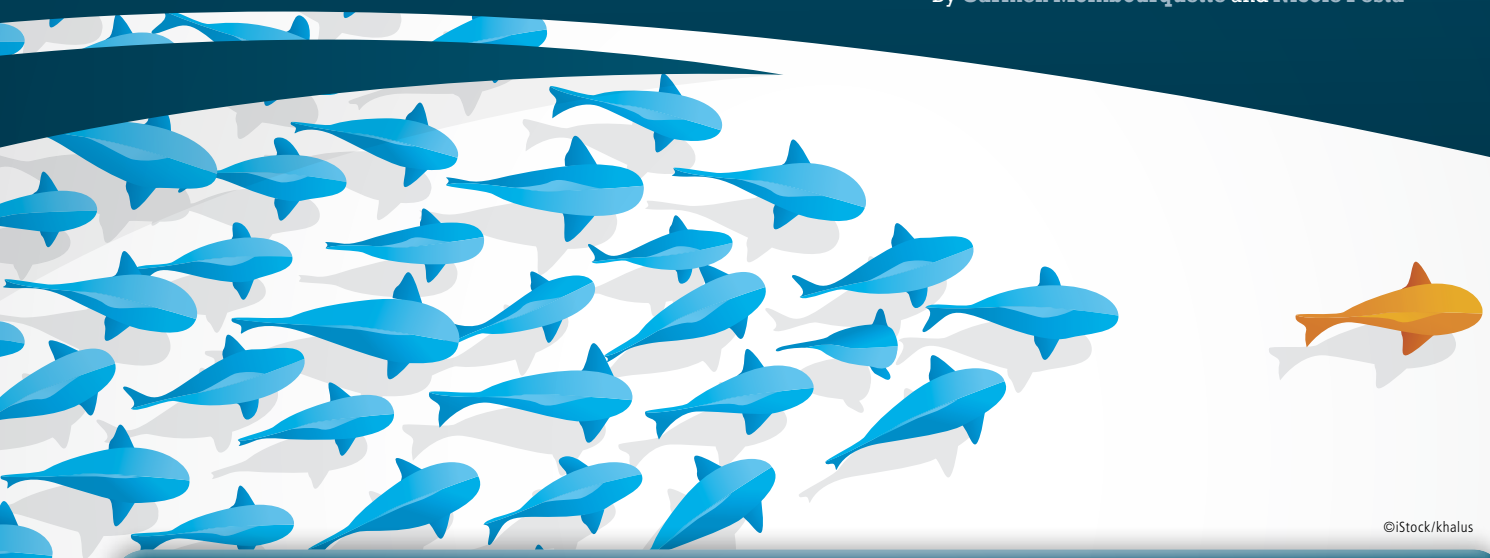
CAP 150 writing contest winner ***Abilash Sathyakumar*** was a grade 12 AP English student at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School in Markham Ontario.

Standard of Practice to Drive School Growth.

Stories From The Field Competency Eight:

Providing Instructional Leadership

By Carmen Mombourquette and Nicole Pesta



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In the last edition of the CAP Journal we shared insights about understanding and responding to the larger societal context core professional competency for principals which emerged during our research about highly effective school leaders in Alberta. In this edition, we continue to share our research findings on the evolution of the Alberta Education standards of practice for school leaders with the seventh of seven competencies, providing instructional leadership. Read on to discover why and how this essential competency, which when practiced by education leaders will lead to optimum learning and development for all students.

Adhering to the Guideline: What the Literature Says

> *"The principal ensures that all students have ongoing access to quality teaching and learning opportunities to meet the provincial goals of education."*
>
> (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 5).

Perhaps the most popularized term of the seven core professional competencies for principals, instructional leadership has been written about in articles and books and emphasized in various educational acts (Education Act, 2012). Instructional leadership has many varied conceptualizations including; (a) principals focusing attention on teachers' behaviours within the school culture (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinback, 1999); (b) principals' categorization of areas such as defining school mission combined with the mode of impact (direct, mediated, or reciprocal) (Hallinger & Heck, 1997); (c) a blend of principals' supervision, staff development, and curriculum development (Blase & Blase, 1998), and (d) principals' skill in modelling, monitoring, and using professional dialogue (Southworth, 2002). Alberta Education (2009) describes effective instructional leadership as an understanding of and an ability to apply both "current pedagogy and curriculum" by the principal (p. 5).

In order to best meet the standards set by Alberta Education in the annual Accountability Pillar (comprised of data such as student achievement results, student, parent, and teacher survey reports, and graduation rates) principals must use direct and indirect influences. Seven strategies to improve school performance are identified by Brown & Green (2014), including: leadership, collaboration, professional development, school organization, data analysis, curriculum alignment, and student intervention. Identifying what students need to know, how to get them to know it, and when they have learned it are three additional strategies put forward by ten Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens, & Sleegers (2012). Despite the increase in evidence which supports reform around developing essential standards throughout curriculums and classrooms, resistance remains from many scholars and teacher organizations (Mason, Mason, Mendex, Nelsen, & Orwig, 2005; Miller, 2013).

Considerable evidence supports the notion that school improvement and student learning are directly linked to effective teachers (Lewis, 2008; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). However, there is little evidence showing that the evaluation of teachers by principals leads to improved student learning (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013). Instead, Murphy et al. (2013) speak to the intricacies of teacher supervision, wherein the principal provides feedback to teachers (Hattie, 2009) while simultaneously: develops teaching communities that share goals, work, and responsibilities for student success (Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008); creates systems that allow teachers to routinely develop and refine their skills (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010); and offers ample support for teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). But just how principals do these functions remains somewhat of an enigma.

How Are Principals Measuring Up?

In our interviews with highly effective school principals we sought to come to know how principals organized their professional duties so as to impact teachers and, through teacher work, student learning.

Providing instructional leadership means the blending of the provisions ordinarily found in school district Teacher Supervision and Evaluation policies, the need for the principals to exercise powers incumbent in the various acts, and the ways and means instructional leadership leads to increased student learning. Our interviewed principals provided powerful testimony to the methods in which they provided instructional leadership. Many of them integrated multiple sources of best recommended standards, such as the blending of the Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta with the day-to-day functions inherent in effective use of Teacher Professional Growth Plans. These principals frequently visited classrooms to monitor progress and to use team building supports to enhance teacher collaborative practice.

The general trend among our interviewed principals was the provision of instructional leadership in meaningful, deliberate, and enjoyable manners. Creative strategies such as utilizing team meetings to determine where teachers were at in their pedagogy were used when putting this competency to practice. Furthermore, all principals spoke to their involvement of other leaders within the school community to aid with teacher supervision and evaluation.

In cases where some teachers needed additional support to meet their student learning goals, principals implemented teacher collaboration. At times this meant changing the way staff meetings were held in order to highlight increased teacher collaboration and growth. One of our principals shared about the positive impact of allowing teachers the time during team meetings to demonstrate, through mini lessons, what was working in their classrooms. This strategy allowed teachers to share their pedagogical innovation without taking on formal leadership roles.

Our principals recognized and spoke to the varied needs of their teachers in regards to their supervision requirements and evaluations, using an equity versus equality approach to supervision. At times the principals used data to help them meet their instructional leadership mandates – some used the data as a starting point from which to enhance meaning to student and teacher accountability, others shared the data among all staff so that there was a shared awareness about the nature and impact of teacher professional development events.

"Considerable evidence supports the notion that school improvement and student learning are directly linked to effective teachers."

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Interview Conclusions

Our principals kept their fingers on the pulse of learning-related activities in their schools by frequent observations of classroom learning, questioning students and teachers about the learning process, and getting feedback from and responding to team meetings. Thus, studying behaviours is an important task of instructional leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). So too are defining school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting school climate (Hallinger & Heck, 1997), and these are the levers by which principals exert their most direct influence.

Most of our principals also invested much time in reading current literature about teaching and learning processes, and encouraging

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"...studying behaviours is an important task of instructional leadership. So too are defining school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting school climate, and these are the levers by which principals exert their most direct influence."

teachers to incorporate these readings into embedded professional learning and discussion in teams and PLCs. Principals and vice-principals also ensured teachers were familiar with the Program of Studies and their teaching activities were fully informed by the outcomes of the provincial curriculum.

With an appreciably greater emphasis on instructional leadership and accountability over the last decade came the recognition that teachers in Alberta needed a serious upgrade in knowledge and skills regarding assessment for and of learning. When interwoven, learning-focused leadership, assessment of student learning, and school improvement provide a framework for an aligned and coherent approach to developing and implementing strategies that can have a positive influence on sustained improvement in a school (Aitken, 2009; Webber, Aitken, Lupert, & Scott, 2009). Our principals understood explicitly the elements to weave together. PLCs were important structures within all schools to advance knowledge and skills about teaching and learning.

Several of our principals shared the sentiments of Murphy et al. (2013) and the other cited authors on the topic of teacher supervision, and instead of treating teacher evaluation and supervision as an exercise focused on individual teachers, they began to invest more time and effort in assessing the quality and content of teacher team meetings, committees, and PLCs—for these were critical sites of embedded learning and the springboard to changing practices. Principals also put greater emphasis on ensuring teachers developed competencies in new and emerging pedagogical technologies. The more technologically adept, and sometimes reluctant, teachers were encouraged to share their expertise at staff meetings, and this often stimulated a flow of teachers into particular classrooms where technological innovation was on the agenda. ■

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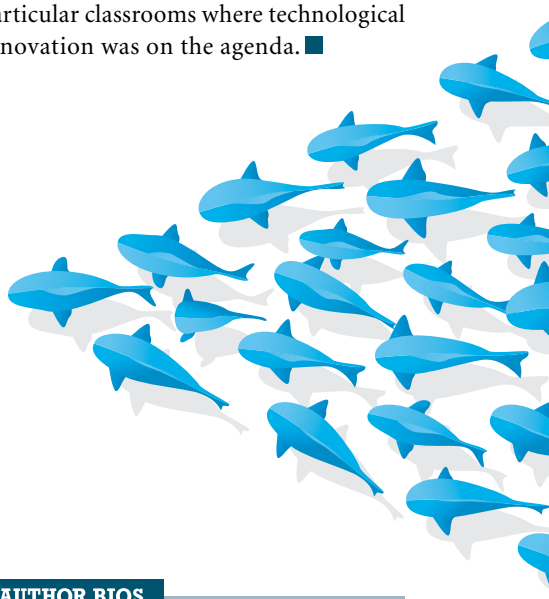

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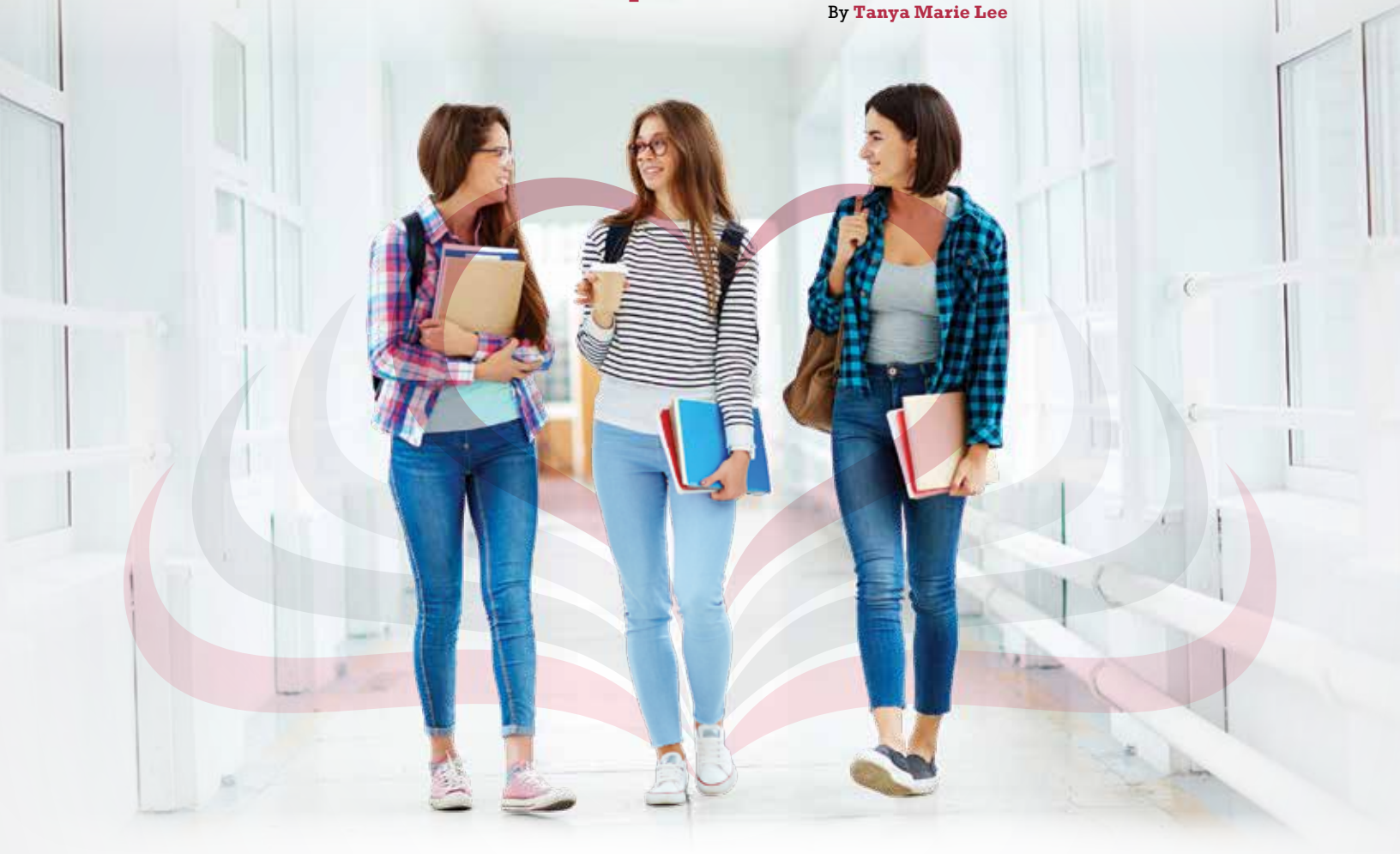
A Room of Your Own

Innovative Book Club Provides a **Safe Space** for **Girls**

By **Tanya Marie Lee**



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This past January 2017, Tanya Marie Lee started a book club for teen girls at risk in under-serviced areas in Toronto. The book club is entitled "A Room Of Your Own Interactive Book Club" and runs out of the Toronto Public Library. The main focus of the book club is to create a safe space for girls that focuses on issues specific to being teenaged girls and their mental health.

There are several reasons why she created this book club for these girls. Intimately observing and studying the world of teens, she realized that the choices one makes when one is young affect the rest of one's life. Most adults seem to forget that their adolescent years were hard. These years are the hardest because at such a young age one does not have the most effective medium to communicate feelings, frustrations, and fears, or the sophistication to handle most problems being faced. Lee states, "Not only have I studied it, I have lived it. I am a survivor of sexual abuse; I came from a dysfunctional family, and by the time I was 18 I became pregnant. At 19 I was a teenage mom with no money, and my options were limited".

"Statistically, all major **social** and **psychological** problems originate in pre-pubescent and pubescent years. This is due to **ineffective methods** of **coping** with **social** and **personal problems**."

Tanya realized the difficulties she faced, and knows the importance of teaching young teens the skills of how to cope with the challenges of maturing mentally and physically into adulthood. These challenges are many: trying to adjust to societal pressures such as living up to peer fashion standards and the media images of models and icons of pop culture. Another major challenge is learning how to deal with the complex aspects of their environment, including the school. These include issues revolving around social media, peer pressure, abuse, drugs, alcohol, gangs, crime, sex and stereotypes. Whom do they have to turn to but their parents? In today's society both parents are often working to maintain the family. In addition, not all parents are good communicators with their teens. Most alcohol and drug addictions start in the adolescent years. Statistically, all major social and psychological problems originate in pre-pubescent and pubescent years. This is due to ineffective methods of coping with social and personal problems.

Add to this the barriers that girls face and the dreadful statistics of what can happens to teenaged girls. The most alarming are those related to sexual abuse and the decline in girls' mental health when they approach adolescence.

Statistics from The Canadian Women's Foundation:

- Girls are four times as likely as boys to be sexually assaulted by a family member.
- Girls are 15 times more likely than boys to be hospitalized for eating disorders.
- As girl's approach adolescence, they face high levels of sexual assault and other forms of violence, a sharp decline in mental health and confidence, negative stereotyping and sexualisation
- The pressure to do well at school may be a contributing factor, as 55% of 15-year-old girls in Canada report feeling stressed about school and grades.
- Nearly 1 in 4 Canadian girls aged 15-17 report feeling high levels of daily stress.
- The widespread sexualization of girls in our society also plays a major role in the deterioration of girls' mental health. Sexualization occurs when a person's main value is attributed to their sexual appearance – rather than their intelligence or other qualities – and when they are held to unrealistic standards of physical attractiveness.
- Social scientists have found that exposure to sexualized images and messages can lead to body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, depression, and low self-esteem.

After reading and digesting all these statistics and living through them, Ms. Lee decided to create a safe space for teenaged girls where they are celebrated and given a chance to be themselves. Through the book club these adolescent girls read books with strong female protagonists from a variety of different backgrounds. They come together with the author and discuss the book in a lively manner. There are times when experts in certain subject matters such as mental health issues are brought in. The club celebrates young women and empowers these adolescent girls with tools to feel good about who they are. The group does this all through reading fantastic books, and having extraordinary discussions. The young women are engaged through their intellect and come to realize just how valuable they are in our society.

Young women need "Safe Spaces" where they are put first and not socialized to take a back seat on the bus. They need a place where they can feel wonderful about being young women and not made fun of or put down for being girls. These young women need to be uplifted in life and not be condemned to being one of the downtrodden. In addition, they need to feel physically safe and not threatened in any manner just because they are of the female gender. Most importantly their mental health needs to be of upmost importance in creating these safe spaces for girls. ■

AUTHOR BIOS

Tanya Lee is the host, visionary, and producer behind A ROOM OF YOUR OWN. This specialized book club is a combination of education and entertainment to form edutainment. Tanya is a graduate of York University's Psychology program, has studied Motion Picture Production at Ryerson Polytechnic University and graduated from George Brown's Life Skills Certificate program. Lee states that this book club combines her compassion for teens, employs her appreciation of all forms of multi-media, and social media which allows her to exercise her drive as an artist and knowledge of human behaviour as host of A ROOM OF YOUR OWN.

Improving the School Community Through Health and Physical Education

By **Thomas G. Ryan**

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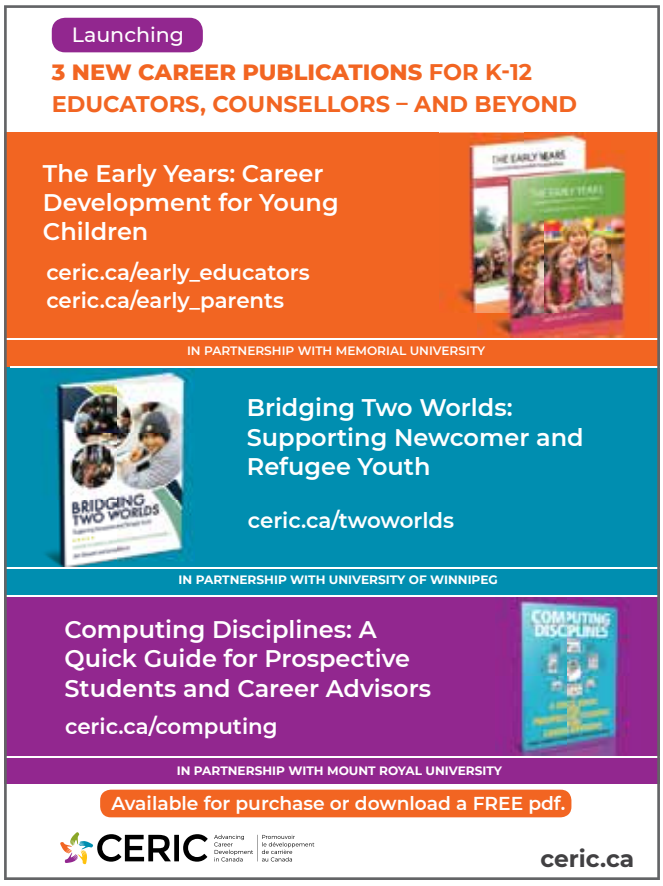
Perhaps this is true in all provinces and territories however since I live and work in Ontario I am focusing on what I live each day as a physical educator in Ontario. Since the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) released a revised Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curricula on February 23, 2015 for both elementary (K-8) and secondary (9-12) level students, the larger Ontario community has offered both positive and negative appraisals and even protested its content at times. Still, full and obligatory implementation of these revised curricula began in September of 2015.

The 2015 H&PE curricula is larger at approximately 220 pages, it is much larger than the previous 40 page curricula and involves the whole person in terms of health and wellness. For instance, the curricula suggests healthy, active living benefits both individuals and society in many ways- by increasing productivity ... *healthy, active living benefits both individuals and society in many ways – for example, by increasing productivity and readiness for learning, improving morale, decreasing absenteeism, reducing health-care costs, decreasing anti-social behaviour such as bullying and violence, promoting safe and healthy relationships, and heightening personal satisfaction. (OME, 2015a, p.7)*

Of note are the benefits, and belief that H & P.E. can decrease "anti-social behaviour such as bullying and violence, promote safe and healthy relationships, and heighten personal satisfaction" (OME, 2015a, p.7). The Health and wellness of a school is an ongoing daily challenge since bullying, an unfortunate familiar occurrence, is widespread, global and not unique to one ethnicity, culture, or gender. The behavior can be linked to all ages (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010) and some suggest bullying is "a form of aggression, characterized by repeated psychological or physical oppression, involving the abuse of power in relationships to cause distress or control another" (Carr-Gregg & Manocha, 2011, p. 98).

This oppression "is generally understood as the domination of subordinate groups in society by a powerful (politically, economically, socially and culturally) group" (Mullaly, 2002, p. 27). All stakeholders need an "understanding of the complexities and origins of the oppression that exists in our society and impact on individuals. It encompasses many theories including, but not limited to "radical, structural, feminist, anti-racist, critical, and liberatory frameworks" (Campbell, 2003, p. 2). We move against oppression by "challenging our perceptions and assumptions, critically analyzing what we know and recognizing power in interpersonal relationships. However, anti-oppression work cannot end there. For any real change to happen, we must also work to restructure systems and institutions" (Springtide Resources, 2008, p. 2), to improve the lived educational experience. We must reach into the community since, *parents are the primary educators of their children with respect to learning about values, appropriate behaviour, and ethno-cultural, spiritual, and personal beliefs and traditions, and they are their children's first role models. It is therefore important for schools and parents to work together to ensure that home and school provide a mutually supportive framework for young people's education. (OME, 2015a, p.13)*



Given this understanding of oppression coupled with the belief that bullying is "any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated" (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014, p. 7) demands that stakeholders act.

Historically it was Olweus (1993) who explained, "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students" (p. 9). Of course it is a negative action, *when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another… negative actions can be carried out by words (verbally), for instance, by threatening, taunting, teasing, and calling names. It is a negative action when somebody hits, pushes, kicks, pinches, or restrains another by physical contact. It is also possible to carry out negative actions without use of words or physical contact, such as by making faces or dirty gestures, intentionally excluding someone from a group, or refusing to comply with another person's wishes. (Olweus, 1993, p. 9)*

Bullying is an intentional act of harm that happens recurrently over time (Carr-Gregg & Manocha, 2011). The Ontario H&PE curricula use the term bullying 48 times within the elementary (K-8) document and 28 times in the secondary (9-12) document. As well, teachers are informed of "personal safety topics [that] focus on developing skills to identify, prevent, and resolve issues in areas such as bullying, peer assault, child abuse, harassment, and violence in relationships" (OME, 2015a, p.37). This is important since victimization research has revealed that school performance of those who are bullied often respond with reduced academic performance, withdraw and/or increase absenteeism (Carr-Gregg & Manocha, 2011).

Bullying in schools is serious as there are enduring, negative effects on those involved (Carr-Gregg & Manocha, 2011) for instance bullies often exhibit antisocial personality disorder traits, along with anxiety and substance abuse (Carr-Gregg & Manocha, 2011).

Perhaps this is why Ontario Physical educators are being asked: *Are intentional steps being taken by educators and students to build skills for healthy relationships and ensure that bullying and harassment are prevented, or addressed if and when they occur, in the change room, the gym, outdoors, and in all learning spaces? (OME, 2015a, p.51)*

Moreover, each curricula actually includes prompts for the educator via scripts:

Teacher prompt:
"What is an example of social bullying? Physical bullying? Verbal bullying?"

Student:
"Social bullying could include leaving someone out of the group, refusing to be someone's partner, spreading rumours in person or online, or totally ignoring someone. Physical bullying could include pushing someone, pulling hair, or knocking a person down. Verbal bullying could include name calling,

mocking, teasing about appearance, including weight, size, or clothing, and making sexist, racist, or homophobic comments in person or online. Any of these kinds of bullying could cause emotional pain." (OME, 2015a, p.140)

These scripts complete with prompts allow educators to prepare with advance organizers and visualize how they can prepare to introduce sensitive topics. Research further informs these curricular inclusions for example Fluck (2017) found "peer pressure" was a key factor and motive in many instances (p. 582). Bullies also suggest revenge as a motive as well as sadism and power yet victims believed bullying just happens or perhaps is a demonstration of power and bullies often justify behavior linking it to revenge (Fluck, 2017). The Fluck research lists revenge, fun, social status (power), deserved attack (revenge), being different (ideology), peer pressure, provocation, self-defense, coping with emotions, antipathy and thoughtlessness as prevalent elements in bullying. Within the elementary curricula another teacher script aids the educator suggesting an educator ask:

Teacher prompt:
"What kind of support will the person who was bullied and the bystander need?"

Student:
"They need to be listened to and given a chance to express their feelings about the harm that has been done and to contribute their ideas about what needs to be done to put things right. They need to be given help to make sure the bullying stops. They might be afraid and may need counselling to recover emotionally from being bullied or witnessing bullying. (OME, 2015a, p.198)

The use of these prompts and scripts is essential as educators may not have the necessary background nor training in this area yet bullying must be dealt with as bullying effects the victim's mental and physical health triggering loneliness, peer rejection, enduring anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, suicide ideation, and psychosomatic problems (Vessey, DiFazio, & Strout, 2013) as well as an aversion to school (absenteeism/truancy) due to the unsafe environment (Shetgiri, 2013). The student may complain of headaches and migraines while experiencing panic attacks, and frequent illnesses (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008: Walden & Beran, 2010). In response educators can turn to outside agencies, internal supports, the H & P.E. curricula and trained educators.

Within the secondary H & P.E. curricula there are many actions possible. One is to refer to Bullying – We Can All Help Stop It: A Guide for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/multi/english/ BullyingEN.pdf. (OME, 2015b, p.209). The educator is also reminded that under the [Ontario] Education Act (s.1(1)), *"aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil, where (a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of, (i) causing harm, fear, or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social, or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation, or harm to the individual's property, or (ii) creating a negative environment at a school for another individual, and (b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability, or the receipt of special education" and where the intimidation includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written, or other means. (OME, 2015b, p.208)*

Research has informed this section of the act and continues to influence change in society just as the new H & P.E. curricula is developed to build a healthy community, students are taught how they can contribute by "making programs available that discourage bullying, help people respond to it, and promote social justice, equity, and inclusiveness (OME, 2015b, p.171). While some may see these efforts as interventions designed to increase self-esteem, this may not "result in decreased levels of bully perpetration. Similarly, intervention efforts designed to reduce bully perpetration may not result in increased levels of self-esteem" (Rose, Slaten & Preast, 2017, p. 168). Bullying is a personal problem and a community challenge that exists in classrooms, schools and our larger society that requires, in this case, informed H & P.E. teachers who can enact the current curricula to improve the health and wellness of all. ■

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AUTHOR BIOS

Dr. Thomas G. Ryan has been teaching since 1985. He began teaching at the secondary level and taught Law, History and Special and Physical Education. Thom then moved to the elementary level teaching mostly within Special Education. He continues to teach preservice students within Health and Physical Education and is teaching within Graduate Studies at Nipissing University.

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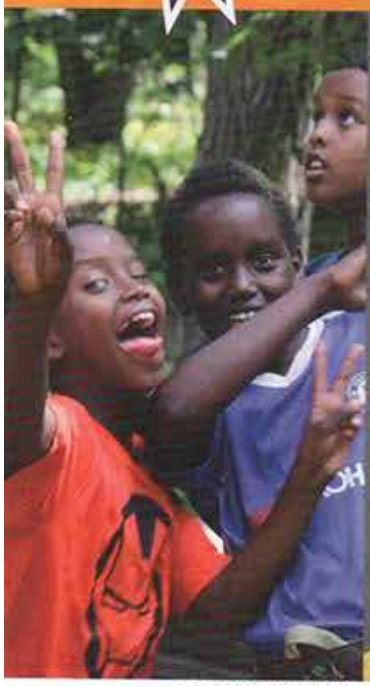

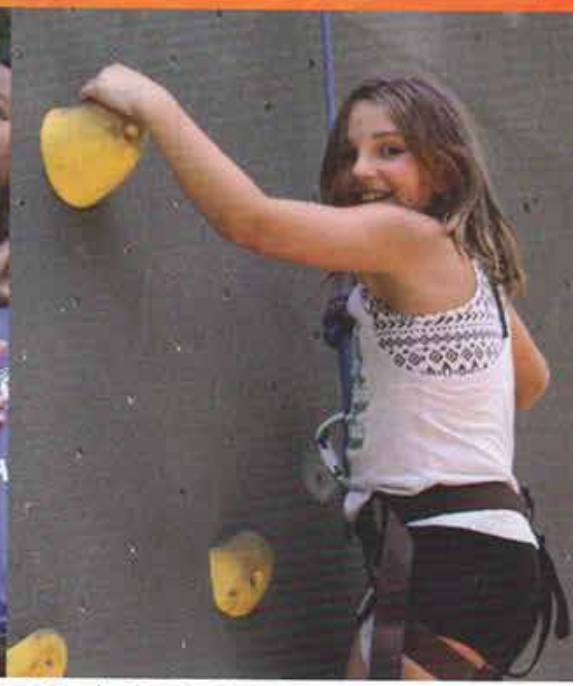

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