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Terry MacIsaac
President, Canadian Association of Principals

Dear School Leaders,

By now, you have returned to the new normal of what school has become. Some of you may be on alternating student schedules, students may be arranged by different groupings or cohorts, and wearing masks has become a way of life. Who would have envisioned this new normal in the education of our students? Let's just hope we are able to maintain this new normal, and not have our world shut down as it did before.

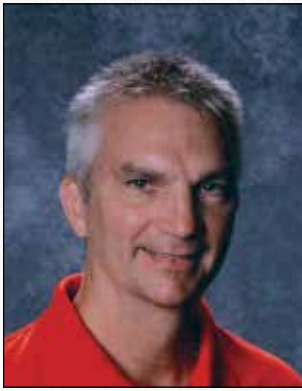
As school leaders, you have had to adjust how you support your staff, students, and parent communities. There have been different versions of online teaching and learning that you have had to coordinate with your staff and this has highlighted some of the gaps in our society that exist around access to technology and internet access. If CoVid 19 has done anything for us, we can use this realization to lobby governments for increased funding and access to this vital resource for learning, from coast to coast to coast.

The school leader was seen as an integral part of the home learning process since March. Teachers were unsure of what they were allowed to teach, what they had to prepare, and the method of instruction they were to use to reach their students. You have had to provide assurances to teachers that what they were doing was ok, while at times being unsure yourself. The health and well-being of your staff and school families became paramount and you may have had to mobilize supports to ensure their well-being was maintained. As school leaders, I want to say great job to everyone, and the stories I have heard from across Canada make me proud to say I am part of the teaching profession.

As an organization, CAP will continue to advocate to governments and organizations to ensure school leaders are provided the necessary direction you need to run your school and support your families. I believe the national voice that CAP brings on your behalf is more vital than ever before, to ensure the needs of our schools and families are met. We know our buildings and families best, and we know how to most effectively meet the needs of our school communities. We need the direction of our school divisions so we follow the correct path, but the autonomy to decide how to get there.

I hope your school year has gotten off to a successful beginning, and I wish everyone good luck as you navigate the new normal taking place this school year.

Terry MacIsaac



Donald Mulligan
Editor, CAP Journal

It has been a pleasure to take over as the editor of the CAP Journal! We have been extremely lucky on Prince Edward Island to have been led through the pandemic by our Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Heather Morrison, our Public Schools Branch, and the Department of Education officials. It has been great to see the high levels of communication between the various departments. When we all look back it is impressive to see how far we have come from the telephone conference meetings to using Google Meet on a daily basis.

All across Prince Edward Island, and I assume across the country, school leaders have spent a great deal of the summer creating back-to-school guidelines. On PEI, several school leaders worked for a week in July to create a template to help the rest of the schools with their return to school plans. The level of teamwork and communication among our school leaders has been phenomenal. As I write this we are just completing our first week with students. We have had a great week, students want to be in school and teachers are doing their usual fantastic job of getting to know their students and starting to work on the learning outcomes. Every day we are reviewing our guidelines to see what is working and what we need to edit!

It is important for us as school leaders to recognize we do not have all of the answers. We must be patient and flexible because throughout this COVID19 experience we have learned that today's correct answer is not necessarily tomorrow's correct answer. School leaders need to recognize the great work being done throughout the school system from custodians, bus drivers, teachers, administrators, directors, and Department of Education staff.

We are beginning a truly unique year. Let us enjoy having the ability to be in schools teaching and learning together. Let's continue to develop positive relationships with our staff and the students in our schools. Most importantly, take time for yourselves. It is important for all school leaders to exhibit what a balanced life looks like for your staff. I will conclude with a favourite quote from one of my valued staff, "We've got this!"

Sincerely,

Donald Mulligan

Seclusion to *Inclusion*

By Margaret Aisicovich



Words such as 'segregation' and 'seclusion' have historically had a pejorative flavor (Fritzen, 2011). However, research indicates that some students benefit from a process of seclusion to inclusion.

Often it is individuals with very little expert knowledge on certain student demographics who have the strongest opinions against even short-term seclusion of said students, opting instead for full inclusion of English as a second language (EAL) and literacy, academics and language (LAL) students from day one (Aisicovich, 2019). Inclusion also seems to be the mot de jour that educators cling to when justifying their one-size-fits-all program delivery; however, without context, 'inclusion' can be harmful. Inclusion is only effective where there is equity woven through the process and culture of the educational context. What this means is that students with greater needs should receive greater support. In the case of EAL and LAL students, their needs encompass numerous areas, including social, emotional as well as academic, prior to being able to be successful in mainstream English-only or French-only language classes (Berry, 1997; Daniel & Conlin, 2015).



"Inclusion is only effective where there is **equity** woven through the process and culture of the educational context.

The idea of seclusion is still quite distasteful to most senior administrators who may not be aware of the many social and emotional needs EAL/LAL students have that are met when in a short-term secluded setting. Others in metro Manitoba school administration do not see the cost/ benefit in investing funds in EAL/LAL programming because they view second language learners in a "deficit light"

(Liggett, 2010). Further to this view, often those divisions that do develop specialized programming for second language learners do not hire specialized EAL educators and educational assistants (Aisicovich, 2019).

EAL/LAL students coming from a myriad of countries bring with them a variety of cultural mores, literacy levels and academic

knowledge. The assumption that placing them into mainstream classes will support them academically is short-sighted and limited. In this case inclusion is a damaging concept. Scoval (1978) describes how,

Placing EAL/LAL students in mainstream classes without the requisite linguistic abilities to thrive creates a stressful context that subjects students to high levels of anxiety. This biochemical response puts many students under physical strain for extended periods of time, as they try unsuccessfully to acculturate, integrate and learn. (Scoval, 1978)

This line of thinking, and the resultant process guarantees that EAL/LAL students will not be successful, and some will inevitably drop out entirely (Platt, Harper & Mendoza, 2003; Roessingh, Kover & Watt, 2005).

Some metro Manitoba school divisions have had the insight to develop EAL/LAL classes specifically for new Canadians who arrive with below grade level language ability and or interrupted schooling in order to help them fill their academic gaps and to learn English/ French fluently prior to inclusion into grade five through twelve mainstream classes. However, often it is a new education graduate, term teacher who has EAL/LAL added to his or her schedule and therefore the support these students receive is not specialized or supportive of their needs (Aisicovich, 2019). The role of EAL/LAL teachers is to develop an environment allowing for a variety of perspectives, views and culture, giving EAL/LAL students' a voice, and to advocate for their needs while supporting and nurturing their academic potential, all of which requires expertise (Coulter, Wiens & Fenstermacher, 2009). Research shows that a short-term seclusion of EAL/LAL student at the outset of their academic career in a highly supportive environment with a skilled specialist will benefit them in the long run. This respite allows the students to develop social skills, language skills and overcome culture-shock while learning the lingua franca (Aisicovich, 2019). This short-term seclusion also ensures that when EAL/LAL students are integrated into the mainstream classes they will be more successful and ultimately more productive members of

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society (Daniel & Conlin, 2015; Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997; Kouritzin, 1999; Schwartz, Kozminsky & Leikin, 2009; Shohamy, 2014). In most cases, once EAL/LAL students have developed the requisite level of English language proficiency, they are transitioned into regular mainstream classes with great success.

Education is a fluid and organic entity, constantly shifting and growing as research

and initiatives are adopted across Manitoba divisions. The spread of globalism has also created a sense of normalcy of new Canadians in Manitoba schools. Additionally, new courses and certification opportunities added to the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg offerings are allowing for a greater expertise to be developed by educators entering the workforce. It is hoped that all these factors will working together

to help create a greater understanding of the social, emotional and academic needs of new Canadians as they enter the public-school system. It is also hoped that with this growth of understanding, senior administration in Manitoba school divisions will have a paradigm shift regarding the concept of inclusion and will consider their student demographic when assigning resources and funds. ■

Author Bio

Margaret Aisicovich is a principal of Inwood, a K-12 school in Lakeshore School Division. Prior to being a principal, she worked in RETSD as a Divisional Consultant for EAL. Margaret holds a PhD in Education.

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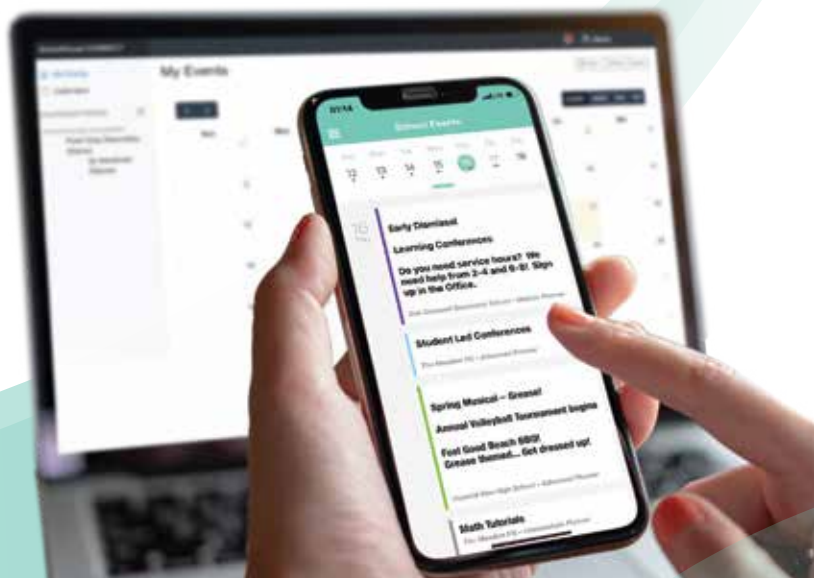
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A photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a checkered shirt, sitting and talking to a young man in a white jacket. They are in a school hallway with lockers in the background. The image is framed by orange and yellow geometric shapes.

Counselling: an Important Skill for School Principals

By Jacqueline Kirk

As school principals engage in strategic planning initiatives and ask teachers to develop professional growth plans, they should consider adding 'counselling skill development' to their own professional growth initiatives. A recent study that involved more than one hundred Canadian school principals and vice-principals indicated that many administrators acknowledge a need for more training to prepare them for the counselling role of school principals. The results of the study illustrated the extent to which administrators are involved in counselling situations with members of the school community and confirmed the need for administrators to have access to training and support.

The study evolved out of the researcher's personal curiosity about the importance of creating opportunities for school administrators to develop knowledge and skills in the area of interpersonal counselling. The researcher, who had served for five years as a high school principal, believed that some of the most important work that she did on a daily basis was to talk to a variety of individuals, who were caught in difficult situations. Sometimes, it was a student, who was struggling academically. Sometimes, it was a staff member, who was having an issue with a student or a co-worker. Workdays of school administrators are often absorbed by individuals that seek support, rather than by managerial tasks that keep things running smoothly. 13% of the principals (n=122) indicated that more than 50% of their normal school days were spent in different counselling situations. Both the nature of the topics reported by participants and the frequency with which participants stated that they were being called upon to employ counselling skills, illustrated that counselling knowledge and skills would be appropriately considered in the growth plans of school administrators. This article will address the need for more research in this area, explain the methodology and results of the study, and confirm the importance of training and support for school administrators, who provide counselling as part of their day-to-day role.

*“Workdays of school administrators are often absorbed by individuals that **seek support**, rather than by managerial tasks that keep things running smoothly.”*

In the Literature

Although participants in this study reported that this is an important issue facing school administrators, an extensive search of the literature revealed only two studies about the counselling roles of the school principal and both were conducted by students as their dissertation research (Balch, 2008; Cleckler, 2010). Balch (2008) conducted a quantitative study that considered whether key counselling skills and administrator demographics could predict school status in Indiana and tested the ability of the survey to identify key counselling skills. Cleckler (2010) sought to establish a relationship between counsellor's reports of principal effectiveness and the principal's use of counselling skills. While these studies made a connection between principals'

use of counselling skills and the principals' effectiveness in their role, neither study explored the counselling roles of the school principal. Therefore, the purpose of this foundational study was to establish how often principals find themselves in a counselling role, and what types of counselling they are doing.

Methodology

This survey research targeted school principals, working in a variety of contexts, to confirm the importance of the counselling role of the school principal, to assess the amount of counselling that principals were doing and to record the types of counselling situations that were common in their roles. Participants were



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recruited nationally through social media and locally via email to school divisions within the researcher's home province in Canada. A majority of the sample ($n=122$) resided within the province of the researcher. The survey included 20 multiple-choice questions.

Findings

The findings confirmed the frequency and the depth of the counselling experiences of school administrators. Participants indicated that their counselling role involved students, teachers, and parents. Additionally, the findings illustrated that daily counselling situations and triage-counselling situations were important considerations.

Counselling with Students

Most principals in the sample indicated that they talked with students about topics that included behaviour (99%), academic performance (93%), issues that arose outside of school (92%), and relationships with other members of the school community (96%). To a lesser degree (66%), principals in the sample were also engaged in discussions regarding students' future career plans. Qualitative responses gathered in the "other" category indicated that some respondents were involved in discussing heavier topics including suicide, mental health, anxiety, depression, family relationships, abuse, smoking, alcohol, and drug use. This finding illustrates a need for principals to have formal training to ensure that they have the skills to navigate those important conversations.

Counselling with Teachers

Most of the principals in the sample group indicated that they engaged in discussions with teachers about difficulties at work that caused anxiety (90%), difficulties at home that might affect their work (85%), and relationships with other members of the school community (90%). In the "other" section, all six responses suggested that principals were also talking to teachers about mental health issues. Teachers assume important responsibilities in the school community; therefore, administrators need to navigate skillfully through these conversations to promote greater teacher resiliency and stronger school communities.

Counselling with Parents

The item regarding the types of counselling discussions with parents included a high response rate for topics about their child's behaviour, academic progress, or other anxiety producing issues. Additionally, most principals in the sample responded that they discussed family difficulties with parents that might affect the school or the community and their child as well as parent or child relationships with other members of the school community. Those who responded in the 'other' category mentioned mental health, parenting support, and immigration issues.

Daily Counselling

The research findings suggested that counselling was a normal part of the principal's day-to-day role. Participants estimated the amount of a normal day that they spent counselling members of the school community. 46% of respondents indicated that counselling discussions took up more than 20% of their day. A task that commands this much of the principal's time, and relates to such important issues, demands that the principal have or develop the skills required to respond appropriately.

Crisis Triage Counselling

The school principal is often required to be a 'point person' in times of crisis. The role shifts from counsellor to triage agent, a person who listens and then directs people to counselling or healthcare. 78% of respondents indicated that this happened several times per year. One participant wrote,

"...it happens much more than a few times a year, there are weeks when I spend the better part of 2-3 days connecting families to social work, outside agencies, counselling, setting up counselling in the school beyond the guidance counsellor, connecting families to school teams, attending and hosting multiple agency wrap-around meetings for families in crisis, calling CFS [and] any possible agency I can muster."

This is a crucial role and one for which many principals are unprepared.

Conclusion

The participants in this study indicated that several times a year they were required to act as a triage counsellor and decide which school and community resources might serve the needs of individuals in crisis. They acknowledged that counselling was a regular part of their daily work and reported that they engaged in counselling discussions with parents, teachers, and students.

Furthermore, they described conversations about mental health and other issues that would place the student, teacher, or parent in a vulnerable position. These results call on administrators to add counselling skill acquisition to their professional growth plans. Furthermore, the results indicate a need for school systems to prioritize training and support in this area to ensure that school principals can successfully fulfill their counselling roles. ■

Author Bio

Jacqueline Kirk, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and the Chair of the Department of Leadership and Educational Administration in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University in Brandon, Manitoba. Jackie will be speaking about the counselling role of the school principal at the Canadian Association of Principals annual conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba in May 2020.

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Principals on Social Media: Why Should You Get Online?

By Kirsten Thompson



Schools can no longer be autonomous organizations that operate behind closed doors.

The Covid-19 pandemic has placed a magnifying glass on schools that sees administrative directives held to account by a wide spectrum of diverse stakeholders that includes everyone from student family's and community members to divisional administration and governmental departments. As the leader of their building it is one of the principal's primary objectives to communicate school information clearly and concisely with all stakeholders (Farrell, 1999, Parents & Community chapter, para. 7) (Ferriter, Ramsden, & Sheninger, 2011, p. 20) (Waxman, Boriack, Lee, & MacNeil, 2013, p. 191). One indicator of a principal's managerial effectiveness relates to their ability to select the most appropriate platform(s) to best meet their communication needs (Hines, Edmonson, & Moore, 2008, p. 278). With 25 million social media users in Canada, representing 67% of the population, social media is quickly becoming one of the leading platforms for school administrators to communicate with their clientele (We Are Social, 2020, p. 40). Due to the rising participation in social media and call for transparency by school administrators, it is essential that principals utilize technological tools like social media to communicate about their building, enabling a diverse range of stakeholders to receive information in a timely fashion and see into the world of the school.

The Dalai Lama is quoted as stating, "A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity" (Student Affairs Berkley, 2017, para. 1). A school's stakeholders, whether they be student family's, school employees, community members, or governing organizations, have interrelated goals that can all directly benefit from increased communication that provides more information about what is happening within the school (Farrell, 1999, Parents & Community chapter, para. 3). With social media use in Canada rising 3.8% from 2019-2020 the quickest way for a principal to inform the most amount of stakeholders in one click of a mouse is through social media (We Are Social, 2020, p. 40). Additionally, maintaining an online presence can provide an authentic model of the digital literacy skills that are becoming necessary for students, and all stakeholders, to develop (Johnson, Riel, & Froese-Germain, 2016, p. 9).

The importance of transparency through communication

Transparent communication is a conscious skill that is vital to the health of the school community. In fact, communication has been argued to be the most important job a principal can participate in throughout their day (Ferriter, Ramsden, & Sheninger, 2011, p. 20). In 1999, Farrell stated that, "The school should aim to improve its links with parents and the community through clear communications and making systematic and full use of the community" (Parents & Community chapter, para. 19). This sentiment is echoed by Ferriter who identified that, "With transparency being more important now than at any time ever, it is important that we use every means necessary to get out our message as schools leaders and get the feedback necessary to get our stakeholders invested." (2011, para. 7). While it can be easy for an administrator to default to only sharing information surrounding school schedules, events, and successes, a deeper sense of authenticity is required to build trust

through transparent communication. This includes sharing personal feelings during times of uncertainty, sharing news of what is known about various topics affecting the school and being open about what is being kept confidential, and clarifying that if information changes that updates will be provided (Student Affairs Berkley, 2017, para. 3). It is important for administrators to recognize that a fear of negativity cannot warrant opting out of communication and in fact, negative feedback provides opportunities to change stakeholders' perceptions (Reuban, 2017, p. 7). With the importance of transparency through communication identified, a principal should then ask themselves what platform(s) should they be utilizing to communicate.

Why should you use social media?

As of 2020, 35.32 million users, representing 94% of the population, had access to the internet in Canada (We Are Social, 2020, p. 24). Of the 25 million using social media, the average user spends one hour 49 minutes each day interacting with their platform(s) of choice (We Are Social, 2020, p. 42). The network of school stakeholders can span across multiple geographical locations, be represented across generations, and follow a variety of different schedules. Despite the communication concerns that arise from these logistics, social media can provide an effective means of targeting the masses in a timely fashion. In fact, 83% of Canada's internet users have access through some type of mobile device; meaning that a principal's communication can most likely reach them at any time as opposed to relying on a fixed location (We Are Social, 2020, p. 25). As opposed to more traditional communication methods such as phone calls or television announcements that rely on stakeholders being available at a particular time, tools such as social media are popular with stakeholders because they can be accessed and interacted with at any time; gone are the days of playing "telephone tag" (Hines, Edmonson, & Moore, 2008, p. 283). In Canada, the top four social media platforms are currently YouTube, Facebook (and its associated Facebook Messenger), Instagram, and Twitter (We Are Social, 2020, p. 43). Tools such as "HootSuite" and "If This Then That" can easily allow principals to post the same message automatically across various platforms; broadening their audience with minimal time requirements on their side. With such prominent statistics, Reuban was inclined to state that participation in social media is no longer an option (2017, p. 11).

The case for Digital Literacy

Defining the important and essential role of ICT education within the vast curricular network of public education has been the focus of recent initiatives undertaken by provincial and territorial governments within Canada. As of 2015, 11 of Canada's 13 provinces and territories have established ICT curricular policies that range from infusion and dispersal amongst pre-existing curriculums to structured cross-curricular models and specifically assessed benchmarks (Hoechsmann & DeWaard, 2015, pp. 15-17). Regardless of the format in which an ICT curriculum is organized, one of the best ways to model the digital literacy and citizenship skills required by students is for principals and other educators to get involved online (Jackson, 2011, para. 18). In a 2016 study of Canadian teachers, it was identified that the top five digital literacy skills related to social media that students should know are: (1) how to stay safe online, (2) appropriate online behaviour, (3) dealing with cyberbullying, (4) understanding online privacy

issues and settings, and (5) verifying the authenticity of online information (Johnson, Riel, & Froese-Germain, 2016, p. 9). It is time for educators to not only "talk the talk" but to also "walk the walk" when it comes to applying the digital literacy skills we expect from our students. Furthermore, modelling appropriate use and keeping up to date with new technology programs and tools allows for principals to more effectively support their teaching staff in their technological development as well (Waxman, Boriack, Lee, & MacNeil, 2013, p. 193).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary that principals utilize social media platforms to effectively practice transparent communication with their diverse range of stakeholders. All principals have several different stakeholder groups that can include everyone from student families and community members to divisional administration and governing agencies and it is their responsibility to create and deliver information in ways that not only allow their message to be accessed but to also establish trust (Ferriter, Ramsden, & Sheninger, 2011, p. 20). As identified by Reuban, social media is no longer a spectator sport and principals need to recognize this and jump on the bandwagon to reach their stakeholders through mediums they are using daily (2017, p. 11). As leaders within their building, a principals' use of social media can provide an effective and appropriate model to both students as well as other teaching staff. Like it or not, a school's stakeholders are already creating a story about the school on social media and principals need to get online so that they can be involved in the narrative. ■

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Supporting School Improvement Through Collaborative Inquiry

By **Edward Schroeter**, OCT and **Alexandra Youmans**, OCT, PhD



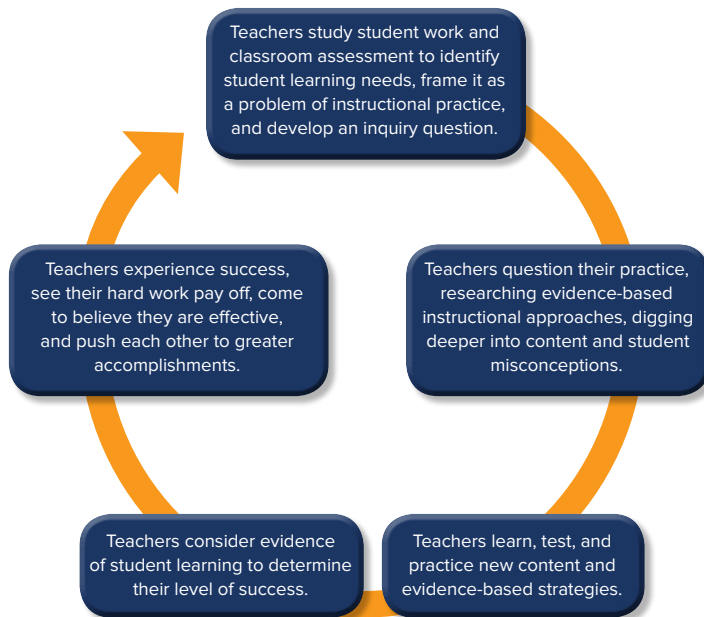
School improvement planning is a process undertaken by principals and teachers to increase student achievement in their respective schools. It involves identifying areas of student achievement that need to be improved, outlining what activities should be implemented to promote improvement, setting timelines for these activities, and determining what measures will be used to record whether improvement has occurred (Education Improvement Commission, 2000).

While school improvement plans (SIPs) help school staff work toward collective goals, they tend to be viewed more positively by principals; in a nationally representative American sample, principals were more likely than teachers to believe that SIPs change teaching practices (67% versus 44%) and lead to school improvement over a five-year period (81% versus 64%; Doss, Akinniranye, & Tosh, 2019). The fact that teachers have less favourable perspectives on SIPs suggests there is room to enhance school improvement planning. One way to engage teachers more actively in supporting student achievement is to incorporate collaborative inquiry (CI), a team-based form of recurrent professional development.

What is Collaborative Inquiry?

Collaborative inquiry “is a process in which participants come together to examine their own educational practice systematically...driven by the consideration of student learning needs” (Limestone District School Board, 2012, p. 2; see Figure 1). A CI cycle begins with a group of like-minded educators who identify an area of professional practice that they would like to explore together to better meet the learning needs of their students. Like any effective inquiry, it involves developing an open-ended question to guide the learning. For example, a group of eleven kindergarten educators in Ontario involved in a year-long inquiry about early math used this question to guide their inquiry: “What instructional practices best support early geometry and spatial sense development?” (Youmans, Schroeter, & Colgan, in press). During a CI, teachers question and challenge aspects of their professional practice in relation to an area of demonstrated student weakness. After researching potential solutions, the team modifies past practices and implements new ones. In the case of the CI mentioned earlier, educators implemented and refined different hands-on-activities (e.g., design challenges, provocations, use of manipulatives) to support students’

Figure 1: The Collaborative Inquiry Cycle



early math learning. As part of a CI, the team collects evidence of student learning to evaluate whether their change in practice had a positive impact on learning (Donohoo & Katz, 2018). With respect to the early math CI, the team used early math trajectories to assess whether students' understanding of geometry and spatial sense developed (see Clements & Sarama, 2009). When a school team experiences success with a CI, they come to believe in their ability to collectively improve student outcomes.

What are the benefits of a Collaborative Inquiry?

Research indicates that Collaborative Inquiry (CI) supports the development of Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE; Donohoo & Velasco, 2016). As a school team comes to realize that their collective hard work is driving their success, their confidence in each other and their ability to improve student achievement increases and they push each other to greater heights (Donohoo & Katz, 2018). Moreover, after participating in a CI, team members tend to adopt high-quality, evidence-based pedagogical practices, an important predictor of student achievement (Katz, Dack, & Malloy, 2017). In fact, according to Hattie's (2017) research on over 250 influences on student achievement, CTE has the greatest influence on achievement with a notable effect size of 1.57. Ultimately, collaborative inquiry improves student achievement through promoting the following productive teacher behaviours:

- ▶ more positive attitudes toward professional development (Rauf, Ali, Aluwi, & Noor, 2012),
- ▶ deeper implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008)
- ▶ a greater focus on academic subject matter (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002), and
- ▶ a deepening understanding of how to assess student learning and use it to guide instruction (Borko, 2004).

What Makes a Collaborative Inquiry Successful?

The success of a CI is dependent on several factors. First and foremost, school districts must develop a shared cultural understanding of the value of collaborative inquiry (Limestone District School Board, 2012). Other elements of successful CI involve the following:

- ▶ Leaders that foster collaboration and data use (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006)
- ▶ Adequate training in inquiry, discussion protocols, and data collection,
- ▶ The development of CI teams that teach similar grades,
- ▶ Sufficient blocks of scheduled time to meet regularly for the duration of an inquiry cycle (Nelson, Slavit, Perkins, & Hathorn, 2008),
- ▶ A skilled facilitator to develop and keep meeting agendas focused on improving instruction,
- ▶ Use of common student assessment samples rather than standardized test scores (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006), and,
- ▶ Data sources rich enough to serve as a basis for discussion and development of alternative instructional practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

In conclusion, collaborative inquiry is a powerful form of recurrent professional development (PD) that promotes collective teacher efficacy and, as a result, increases student achievement. CI is a self-directed form of PD that enables educators to focus on how they can improve their practices to promote achievement in an area of student weakness. Participation in a CI often results in the adoption of high-quality, evidence-based instructional practices that improve student outcomes. ■

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The Millbrook-South Cavan Public School Kindergarten Collaborative Inquiry

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Teacher Perception of Principal Support during the Covid-19 Spring School Closures

By Edward Schroeter



The demand of principal and vice-principal workload on their health, well-being, performance, and job satisfaction has been documented to some extent. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, research conducted in Ontario suggests that elementary school principals' work is becoming increasingly demanding, which can negatively impact their well-being and health (Armstrong, 2014; Pollock, Wang, & Houseman, 2014).

They are subject to increased workloads, a greater variety of demands, new technology, and are required to adhere to stringent policy standards to improve student achievement. As a result, elementary school principals and vice principals are working longer hours, with many averaging 55 hours per week. The research revealed that 86.5% of principals reported that they never seem to have enough time to get their work done, 72.1% feel pressured to work long hours, but 98.1% believe that their job makes a difference in the school community (Pollock, Wang, & Houseman, 2014). Before the pandemic, approximately 72% of Ontario vice-principals reported their work often or always put them in emotionally draining situations (Pollock, Wang, & Houseman, 2017). Much less is known about the emotional labour required of principals to do their jobs. One study of 1320 full-time Australian school principals discovered that they displayed significantly higher scores for emotionally demanding work, burnout and job satisfaction, and significantly lower wellbeing scores than those of the general population. The study pointed out that emotional labour is an essential component of the school principal's role. Given its potential to interfere with both individual and school functioning, the authors called for more research into it (Maxwell & Riley, 2017). Prior to the outbreak of coronavirus, an Ontario study recommended that school districts implement practices that support personal and professional wellness and life balance among principals as a prevention for early burnout, physical illness, and mental break-down (Armstrong, 2014).

The emergency, three-month school closures in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the switch to emergency remote learning has the potential to have significant impact on principal workload, emotional well-being and health. This article reports on a study of teacher and occasional teacher perceptions of elementary principal and vice-principal support during Ontario's Learn at Home remote teaching initiative (April to June 2020). A potentially important finding from this research is the value that teachers place on emotional support during the pandemic. It is a small step in the direction of expanding understanding the emotional labour of school principals. An anonymous, online survey of 1380 contract and 715 occasional (substitute) demographically varied teachers in one mid-sized Ontario school district documented some of the extensive work principals and vice-principals were doing

port Amid



on their behalf during the COVID-19 emergency school closures. A small sample of 72 teacher participants gave their leadership considerable praise for their support in certain specific areas. The survey was posted on two private teacher Facebook groups in May 2020. Although the survey sample is small, its margin of error is $\pm 11.35\%$ with a confidence level of 95%. A second sample survey of 214 teachers and occasional teachers in June in the same school district on the same Facebook groups recorded their concerns about teaching in the era of COVID-19. The margin of error for the second survey is $\pm 6.35\%$ with a confidence level of 95%.

Demographic Information of the Participants

Approximately two thirds of the survey participants had 10 or more years of job experience. The respondents were relatively evenly distributed by years of experience; There were slightly more experienced and mid-career teachers than those in their first decade of their career. Approximately 40% of them were divided evenly between the Junior (Grade 4 to 6) and Intermediate divisions (Grade 7 to 8). Almost 60% of the survey participants were Kindergarten (21.75%) or Grade 1 to 3 teachers (35.5%). The vast majority of the survey respondents had an undergraduate degree (83.3%) and were full-time contract teachers (86.1%). (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Demographic Information

Demographic Information

Teacher Experience in Years	0 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 30+
	26.4%	38.9%	34.8%
Contract Status	Full-time	Partial Contract	Occasional
	86.1%	5.6%	8.3%
Post-Secondary Education	Master's	Bachelor's	Diploma
	8.6%	83.3%	8.1%
Grade Taught	K to Grade 3	Grade 4 to 6	Grade 7 to 8
	57.25%	22.46%	20.29%

Study Findings

Elementary educators faced challenges of learning new technology, providing technology for students, finding online resources, overcoming no internet or poor internet, learning how to teach online, and maintaining contact with children as they problem solved their way through the challenges of Ontario's emergency distance learning plan. The survey reveals that support from principals and vice principals came in the form of resources and supplies for families and students, emotional support to educators, language and mathematics resources, equipment, technical support and advice, online learning platforms, professional development about online tools and planning and delivering lessons, engaging students, providing student feedback, assessment, and reporting to parents. Approximately half of the teachers and occasional teachers who participated in the survey agreed that they value principals work providing them with equipment (40.2%), technical advice and support (47.2%), and information about online learning platforms and tools (59.7%). Approximately one third of them indicated that their principals provided sufficient information about developing report cards (30.6%) and support and resources to them to help the families of students (38.9%). It is noteworthy to point out that slightly more than one third of the participants in the study (34.7%) agreed that their principal provided sufficient “emotional support” during this uncertain time. (See Table 2.) All of the survey participants took the opportunity provided by an optional, open response, write-in section to write about the most important types of support during online teaching. Twenty-six (26) of the 72 respondents or 36.1% added a positive comment about school leadership. Ten (10) of the comments or 13.89% specifically used the words “emotional support,” “moral support,” “compassion,” or “supportive message.” A few of the comments are below:

1. Principal report card support, emotional support for myself and my students, engaging learners
2. Principal emotional support and help with communicating and reaching parent
3. Compassion from principal, connecting families with food insecurity to community and school programs to get them food
4. Daily morning message video from principal which always contains supportive message
5. Mental health check-ins by principal
6. Moral support from principal that we are doing a great job
7. Principal Support for emotional needs, encouragement

The quantitative survey responses about emotional support were analyzed by grade level and years of experience. There was no evidence suggesting that any of the demographic groups valued and therefore possibly needed emotional support more than any of the other groups.

Table 2: Teacher Rating of Principal Support

Topic	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Overall support to me as teacher	20.8%	36.1%	43.1%
Overall support to my students	22.35	40.3%	37.5%
Overall support to the families of my students	32.0%	37.5%	30.6%
Provided sufficient language/literacy resources	26.4%	26.4%	47.2%
Provided sufficient mathematics resources	18.1%	34.7%	47.2%
Provided sufficient equipment for distance learning	40.2%	25.0%	34.7
Provided sufficient technical advice and support	47.2%	27.8%	25.0%
Provided sufficient information about online learning platforms and tools	59.7%	23.6%	16.6%
Provided sufficient information about planning and delivering lessons for distance learning	22.3%	26.4%	51.4%
Provided sufficient information about giving descriptive feedback to students online	15.3%	26.4%	58.3%
Provided sufficient information about assessing student work online	5.6%	29.2%	65.3%
Provided sufficient information about developing report cards during remote learning	30.6%	23.6%	45.9%
Provided sufficient support and resources to me to help the families of my students	38.9%	26.4%	34.8%
Provided me with sufficient emotional support	34.7%	34.7%	30.5%

Valuing emotional support from their principal would not be surprising given some of the issues faced by teachers and occasional teachers during the school closure period. Approximately 84% of Ontario elementary teachers are women (Statistics Canada, 2014). A second anonymous online survey in June about teacher and occasional teacher concerns revealed that among those surveyed:

- almost all of them (92.8%) were feeling stressed about working in schools in September
- 84.8% were feeling stressed as a result of remote teaching
- 49.6% were worried about contracting COVID-19 but were otherwise healthy and
- 39.5% were worried about their own children falling ill from coronavirus.

Many of them faced additional challenges while working at home. They were running households while working long hours. More than half (51.6%) of them cared for at least one school-aged child, 38% cared for 2 or more children and 34.5% found it extremely challenging to care for children while working from home. Some teachers, 9.91%, were the principal caregivers for family members who were immunocompromised or had an existing medical condition that might make them vulnerable to coronavirus. Some of the survey participants, 28.9%, lived with an essential worker suspected to be at greater risk of. Another segment of this population, 26.2%, considered themselves to be immunocompromised. Occasional teachers, largely sidelined in the spring, earned no teaching income during the school closures. One fifth of them (21.2%), were concerned about the potential for insufficient work and income in the near future. Another 14.3% were worried about the risk of exposure to COVID-19 from working at multiple schools. (See Table 3.)

Table 3: Teacher Concerns

Participant Responses	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Applicable
Immunocompromised teacher at greater risk of contracting Covid-19	26.2%	25.2%	12.9%	35.7%
Takes care of a medically fragile or immunocompromised child, adult child, partner, parent or other family member	9.91%			
Work from home with at least one other adult deemed an essential worker at greater risk of contracting COVID-19	28.9%	33.6%	11.5%	26%
Healthy but worried about getting COVID-19	49.6%	14.8%	14.8%	21.0%
Worried about own children contracting COVID-19	39.5%	6.7%	11.9%	41.9%
Stressed or worried about teaching in person in September	92.8%	2.4%	4.8%	0.0%
Remote teaching has increased my stress level	84.8%	3.9%	7.2%	4.3%
Taking care of own children while working from home is extremely challenging	34.5%	5.8%	3.9%	55.8%
Internet inadequate for remote teaching	13.9%	70.8%	15.3%	0.0%
Occasional Teacher concern about the risk of exposure to COVID-19 from working at multiple schools	14.3%	5.7%	0.0%	80.0%
Occasional teacher concern about insufficient income	21.2%	0.5%	0.5%	77.0%

Conclusion

The evolving school reopening plans for September in the era of COVID-19 will no doubt have further significant impact on the elementary principal and vice principal workload, well-being and health. In the case of the specific Ontario school district discussed in this article, elementary principals and vice principals had to reorganize classes, change teacher assignments, and identify surplus staff as a result of families opting for online learning. By August 19, 2020, approximately 16% of the 20,000 elementary students in the district, more than 4000, had registered for Virtual Elementary School (VES). At last count, the VES had 162 virtual classes (129 English, 29 French Immersion or Extended French, and 4 Learning and Life Skills classes) with 170 online elementary teachers including 6 Special Education Resource Teachers (SERT), 2 principals, and 3 vice-principals (anonymized personal communication, September 1, 2020). On September 2, the principals and vice principals of this particular school district began leading their staffs through three Professional Activity days of health and safety training, new procedures for physical classroom set up, recess and nutrition breaks (anonymized personal correspondence, September 2, 2020). One principal reported getting five hours of sleep per night (anonymized personal communication, September 4, 2020). Another reported that it took a two-hour meeting to determine whether it would be possible for duty teachers to safely supervise 240 primary students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 wash their hands, eat, dress, and go outside for recess in small, staggered groups or whether it would work better for the children to go out for recess first, enter after recess in small, staggered groups, wash their hands and then eat (anonymized personal communication, September 4, 2020).

Conclusion

This limited study has shed some light on the role that principals play in providing emotional support to their teachers during a crisis. It provides a starting point for further exploration of the emotional labour involved in being a principal or vice principal and the toll that it and their workload may take on them. It seems that providing a positive outcome for principals and vice-principals requires considerably more research on this topic. A link to a questionnaire about workload and well-being during the September school reopening period was emailed to 88 principals and vice principals, all of whom work for one Ontario school district, on August 26. No responses to The Impact of Re-opening Schools During the Covid-19 Pandemic on Elementary Principals and Vice-Principals survey were received as of September 5, 2020, possibly due to the demands of their job during school reopening. Despite the lack of current information, it is possible to extrapolate from research prior to the COVID-19 era. It suggests that the conditions under which school leaders work is taking a toll on them and provides numerous solutions (Armstrong, 2014; Pollock, Wang, & Houseman, 2014; Stelmach & O'Connor, 2019). Therefore, senior district administrators should be extremely careful not to overlook but to take steps to nurture and sustain the health of their school principals and vice principals for the duration of the pandemic. ■

Education researcher Edward Schroeter invites Canadian principals and vice principals to participate in the development of an article for the Canadian Association of Principals' CAP Journal about school leadership workload and emotional labour during COVID-19. The article will be based on the results of an anonymous survey, The Impact of Re-opening Schools During the Covid-19 Pandemic on Canadian Elementary Principals and Vice-Principals.

Fill out the survey at the following link: <http://bit.ly/CdnPrincipalWorkloadSurvey>

He hopes to publish the results in other professional publications and academic journals, as well as present them at conferences alone or jointly. Read one of his previous articles at the following link:

<https://cdnprincipals.com/the-kindergarten-professional-development-in-math-conundrum/>.

There is no direct benefit of participating in this project to you. There is only the indirect benefit to you of contributing to the advancement of knowledge about principal workload and well-being during a national crisis. It will take 30 minutes to fill out the survey.

Author Bios

Edward Schroeter, B.J., B.Ed., OCT, has worked for Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board since 1992. A Kindergarten Teacher specializing in early geometry, spatial sense, and coding, he is the author of 55 Activities Promoting Spatial Visualization and Orientation (2019) and Nelson Math Grade K (2018). Edward has led multiple collaborative inquiries.

Alexandra Youmans, OCT, PhD, is an adjunct assistant professor at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. She is an advocate of high-quality teaching and learning practices that promote student achievement. Alexandra has had the privilege of documenting successful collaborative inquiries.



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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, *Lifelong Results!*

By Dr. Scott Linehan

I remember, many years ago now, as a new and young principal, leading my first staff meeting on my first day, and intimating to my staff how important I viewed the school improvement process.

The audible murmurs, uncomfortable shifting in seats, and level of uneasiness reflecting in the faces of my colleagues was evident. I, of course, inquired as to what had just transpired. Some of the more senior staff members shared with me that they did not agree with my position on school improvement. My natural response was; “How can you disagree with a process that involves making the school improve?” It was not a pleasant conversation and made for a rocky first day, but fortunately for me, it was also not a harbinger of things to come. The school and staff turned out to be my most loyal and ardent supporters that I have ever enjoyed throughout my career (for the record, they did agree with wanting the school to improve, just not the way it had been previously messaged or implemented).

There’s a general 80 / 20 rule in education. 80% of what happens in education is outside a teacher’s control. Teachers spend about 80% of their time with 20% of the students. 80% of students’ time is spent outside the school. 80% of students know more than they demonstrate on a test. And on it goes. But it is that 20% that makes all the difference. And some of that 20% is malleable. Enter “School Improvement.”

In an impressive meta-analysis review on the effect of school reform programs, Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown (2003) reported that School Development had an effect size of $d = 0.15$. For context, preeminent researcher John Hattie (2009) sets the moral imperative in education for students at $d = 0.40$ as one year of growth for one year of instruction. In his most recent research, Hattie (2020) has Whole-School Improvement Programs at $d = 0.28$. While the literature surrounding school improvement still purports that “the educational relevance of the effects of malleable school conditions is still contested” (Scheerens, 2015, p. 80) it is not to say there has been no effect. There most likely has been an effect. In fact, arguably, there has been probably considerable effect. And that effect has been positive. Perhaps the more appropriate question to ask is; “Where is school improvement having its greatest impact?”

The greatest amount of variance in student achievement is not between schools, but within schools. That is, schools, for the most part, are generally the same in their instructional delivery. Just about every school has great teachers, average teachers, and teachers in need of support. That is a high degree of variance within a school, but every school generally has this same situation, and so that is a very low degree of variance. But, the good news? You can control the variability! So, let’s take a trip to The Rock.

School Improvement. Lifelong Results.

Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development specifically refers to "improvement" in its Strategic Plan. The provincial government is committed to "[i]mprovements in the programs and services offered in the provincial K-12 system" (EECD, 2017, p. 5). School Development/Improvement (SD) is an important, and required, part of this educational endeavour. In their book *Deep Learning*, Fullan, Quinn and McEachen (2018) make a very prescient, and provocative, observation when they note that there "is no reason for the majority of students to take conventional schooling seriously" (p. 3). If they are correct in their conclusion, then it is high time to improve schools.

For the past decade, 12th Graders, on their mandatory 40% exit diploma exams, have experienced incredible grade stability. Mathematics ranged from a low of 57% to a high of 65%. English has a ten year average of 66%. And Biology ranged just 3% in the same ten year time span from 61% to 64%. School Improvement may have gotten us to this point, but an argument about whether continued academic improvement is being realized would be, at best, a specious one (whether "improvement" should be a metric of the results measured by high stakes tests is another conversation entirely). And graduation rates have increased to 97% from 93% ten years ago. But schools are ever so more than simple silos of academic advancement.

If you are one who subscribes to the philosophies of John Dewey or Lev Vygotsky that academic learning and social interaction are inextricably interwoven, then a strong case can be made that School Improvement has made incredible strides in the past decade alone. Through the Education Action Plan, the Newfoundland and

Labrador government embraced, recommended, and implemented Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to support an inclusive model of education. There is a new, and sustained, provision to highlight and include Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in classrooms. The provincial government has committed to provide more attention and resources to student mental health and wellness. There is greater attention focused on Indigenous and Multicultural Education. And this is not even to mention the advancements in Safe and Caring policies and with our LGBTQ2S+ students.

In an effort to quantify these gains, one could turn to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's School Climate surveys administered to public school children. The ministry has discontinued publicly reporting the results of these surveys, however the last available dataset of 12th Graders in 2016 did yield some encouraging results. When students were tasked to respond to the prompt; "School is a place I like to be..." 55% responded "Yes" in 2012. Four years later that number had jumped to over 65%. That is a profound increase in such a short time span. Is School Improvement attributable, at least in part, to this increase? Maybe.

There is a saying in research that correlation is not causation. For instance, take this simple example: Struggling students use tutors more often than gifted students. Gifted students perform better on standardized tests than struggling students. Struggling students are still not equaling gifted students in achievement. Therefore, tutors have a negative effect on achievement. Nevertheless, the temptation to draw the conclusion that School Improvement has made a demonstrable difference on student quality of life is indeed an irresistible one.

So, are schools just about the academics? Of course not. School Improvement is about minds and bodies. Students and persons. Academically and socially. And, according to John Hattie, in his most recent book, he clearly asserts that effective schools are ones that "provide environments that encourage academic growth and reinforce socially appropriate behaviors" (Hattie & Anderman, 2020, p. 23). If history can serve as any kind of guide, then the future is indeed a bright one. I mean, how can you argue against the merits of an initiative predicated on improvement? Its very title has goodness baked right in. ■

Author Bio

Dr. Scott Linehan is a Program Specialist for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. His Ph.D. is in Educational Leadership. He is the provincial facilitator for Visible Learning. Scott's first book *And The Tony Goes To* was released in the fall of 2019.

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The Potential Impact of Covid-19 on the Near-Term Elementary School Teacher Supply

by Edward Schroeter

Evolving Teacher Supply and Demand

The COVID-19 pandemic can be characterized as a “black swan event,” defined as an improbable, unexpected occurrence with broad consequences (Nassim, 2010). This article reports on an investigative survey which examines whether the national supply of trained elementary school teachers will be affected by the pandemic and to what degree. The survey results raise the possibility that attrition-related elementary teacher hiring will emerge as an issue for principals, school districts, and Human Resources (HR) staff in the near term. For the last four years there has been an adequate supply of Kindergarten to Grade 8 teachers across Canada. This situation is changing. In 2018, the national teacher unemployment rate for elementary teachers stood at 4.3%. From 2016 to 2018, the number of job openings for teachers began increasing at a slightly faster pace than the number of jobless. The number of unemployed teachers available to fill vacant positions declined. The hiring pool of available trained elementary teachers is expected to be small in most provinces from 2020 to 2028. Jobs for teachers will be plentiful while there will be a reduced selection of candidates for this in hiring positions. (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019-2020). A teacher shortage has been declared for British Columbia and Quebec (CBC News, 2019; 2020). In Ontario, the situation is more pronounced. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) is predicting impending “English-language teacher shortages” on top of current French-language teacher shortages and “challenging recruitment years ahead.” (2019, p 108). The changing job outlook is the result of increasing retirements from an aging workforce and an increasing number of students entering elementary school. These are the children of the millennial generation. (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019-2020).

Survey Details

The anonymous online survey was purposely confined to elementary teachers and elementary occasional teachers in one specific Ontario school district in the hope that the findings could be generalized to other jurisdictions. Quantifying the potential career decisions of an entire school district’s elementary teaching complement might allow other school boards to apply this data to their own contexts. The school district is not named to protect the privacy of the survey participants. There are approximately 1380 Kindergarten to Grade 8 Teachers and 715 Occasional Elementary Teachers in the district under investigation. The geography of the area includes urban and rural settings. The sample size is 225 out of the total teacher workforce of 2100, making the margin of error is approximately +/- 6.0% with a 95% confidence level. The composition of the sample is consistent with the demographic of the current teacher workforce. A slightly higher proportion of respondents are Kindergarten to Grade 3 contract teachers now that the children of the millennials are entering school, 4% of them are retirement age, and 21.3% of the complement has 20 to 29 years



“The survey results raise the possibility that attrition-related elementary teacher hiring will emerge as an issue for principals, school districts, and Human Resources (HR) staff in the near term.”

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of experience and are on the approach to retirement. (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019-2020). The questionnaire was posted in late July and early August on two private social media groups frequented by the sample teacher population. The survey was conducted following the Ontario government announcement of its September school reopening plan for elementary schools. The plan contains no class size reductions for elementary classes or requirements for children in Kindergarten to Grades 3 to wear masks. It provides limited guidance on how to modify long established daily school routines for social distancing (Office of the Premier of Ontario, 2020). There was a noticeable surge of posts on elementary teacher social media in response to the Ontario announcement. The posts signaled intent to resign, retire early, take a leave of absence, request a workplace accommodation, and a desire to continue remote teaching. The survey was designed to investigate whether teachers and occasional teachers would formally

commit themselves to these career actions and to gauge the firmness of the commitment. It is understood that the survey participants were answering questions “in the heat of the moment” and might well change their minds.

Evidence of Accelerated Teacher Attrition and HR Disruption

The survey provides initial evidence that elementary school reopening plans – even without class size reductions – might precipitate staffing challenges and possibly teacher shortages which are already appearing on the horizon. These issues could include early retirements, unexpected resignations and leaves of absence, requests for workplace medical accommodations, and a large volume of applications to continue teaching remotely from home. Teachers in the surveyed Ontario school district were reporting concerns about teaching in person prior to school reopening

announcements. On a previous survey of the same population conducted in June 2020, almost half of the 214 respondents (49.5%) indicated that they were concerned about contracting COVID-19, 25.9% worried that a pre-existing medical condition would put them or a family member in their household at greater risk of contracting the virus, and 19.4% were debating taking a leave of absence to keep their own children home. The government announcement appears to have crystallized these sentiments. The survey results are provided in Table 1 and Table 2. Here are some of the highlights:

- ▶ Slightly more than one half (51.2%) of contract teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to continue remote teaching from a safe location and another 13.3% of survey participants, occasional teachers, would follow suit if that option were available.
- ▶ A majority of occasional teachers (73.8%) would like the number of schools at which they work limited and almost two thirds (61.6%) think the limited should be from 1 to 5 schools. (See Table 2.)
- ▶ Approximately one quarter of the contract teachers surveyed (26.2%) would like to take a leave of absence and another 11% of occasional teacher respondents would do so if that option were available.
- ▶ Slightly more than one fifth of contract teachers (23.1%) indicated that they would need a workplace accommodation because of their medical history or that of someone they care for e.g., a child, partner, parent, or other family member, while 10.4% of occasional teachers would seek a workplace accommodation if they could qualify.
- ▶ Almost 13% (12.5%) of contract teachers surveyed stated that they are considering resigning and leaving the profession or retiring early, while an additional 10.5%



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of occasional teachers would resign or retire early if they could afford to or had the option in their contracts.

► The situation is more pronounced when the data from the full complement of contract and occasional teachers are combined.

These results are obtained by adding Columns 1 and 4 in Table 1 are shown in Column 5 at a total.

Table 1: *The Impact of School Reopening on Elementary Educator Career Decisions*

Career Decisions	<i>Agree or Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Occasional Teacher would if possible</i>	<i>Total: if it were possible, I would ...</i>
Seek a remote teaching position for September 2020	51.2%	19.5%	16.0%	13.3%	64.5%
Take a leave of absence	26.2%	24.9%	38.6%	10.2%	36.4%
Pursue a workplace accommodation for medical reasons	23.1%	20.5%	46.2%	10.2%	33.3%
Retire early	6.7%	15.1%	73.3%	4.9%	11.6%
Resign from the teaching profession	5.8%	12.4%	78.7%	3.1%	8.9%

Table 2: *Occasional Teacher Preferences Regarding Multiple Work Sites*

Occasional Teacher Preferences	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
Would like the number of work locations for occasional teachers limited	73.8%	16.9%	9.2%
Would like to work at only 1 to 5 locations	61.6%	NA	N/A
Would like to work at 10 or more locations or prefer no restrictions on the number of work sites.	13.0%	N/A	N/A

Discussion & Conclusion

An important question is whether 20.5% of Ontario teachers are likely to act on their thoughts of early retirement or resignation recorded at one specific point in time. They may change their minds as they receive new information. Another unconsidered factor is the approximately 12% to 25% of “undecided” respondents. What career decisions will they ultimately make? Comparing these results to past data can provide some insight. Historically, 5% of Ontario elementary teachers resign annually, the vast majority due to retirement, early retirement, or securing a job with another school board (Clark & Antonelli, 2009). However, the percentage of teacher resignations and retirements has occasionally reached 10% as it did in Ontario in the late 1990s. Generally, only 0.9% of the entire Ontario

teacher workforce leave the profession for another career due to job dissatisfaction (Clark & Antonelli, 2009). Based on these established patterns, it is conceivable that 10% of a district elementary teaching staff will resign during a pandemic. Only time will tell whether more than that follow through with their reported career plans. However, if more than 5% of Ontario educators decide to sit out the pandemic one way or another, the provincial demand for teachers could exceed the available supply in Ontario. (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019-2020; Ontario College of Teachers, 2019). Teacher attrition, even if only temporary, would exacerbate the growing teacher supply problem in Ontario, possibly compelling school boards to aggressively recruit unemployed Ontario graduates from earlier years. They include Ontario-licensed teachers

educated in other jurisdictions and Ontario education graduates who moved out-of-province in the teacher surplus years. Of the 6,555 Ontario trained and licensed teachers who began living outside the province in the last decade, 1,877 of them report they might return to the province (Ontario College of Teachers, 2019). These teachers might be induced to return “given conditions conducive to their return.” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2019, p 108). Ontario teacher recruiters, however, will be hard pressed to provide any incentives, financial or otherwise, to attract these teachers. There is a legislative hurdle. Ontario teacher hiring practices are tightly prescribed by Ontario Regulation 274/12, implemented in 2013. It is a province-wide, extended hiring process. Newly hired teachers work on a roster as an occasional teacher. With seniority they become eligible for long-term occasional (LTO)

Potential Impact of Covid-19

assignments before they can apply for full-time employment (Maynes, Hatt, & Mottonen, 2019; Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2014). Some education analysts have suggested that it may be time to retract or amend the regulation. If Ontario school boards have difficulty filling teacher

vacancies, they will certainly push for changes to this legislation. If the situation becomes pronounced, the provincial government may find itself considering increased class sizes, allowing faculties of education to increase the number of graduates or even fast-track their graduation, implementing emergency protocols for use

of unqualified occasional teachers (Maynes, Hatt, & Mottonen, 2019). Given the similarity of elementary teacher supply and demand statistics across Canada, it would seem prudent for jurisdictions to keep a watchful eye on their own teacher supply and attrition rates as well as unfolding developments in Ontario. ■

Author Bio

Edward Schroeter, B.J., OCT, is a newspaper reporter turned teacher turned education researcher and writer. Previous articles, research and reviews have been published in the CAP Journal, the Ontario Mathematics Gazette, Canadian Teacher Magazine, ETFO Voice, thelearningexchange.ca, and learningtrajectories.org. He is currently the Lead Writer—Grade 1 for the OAME-AFEMO Elementary Math Curriculum Resource Project. He is currently a Kindergarten Teacher by the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board in Peterborough, ON.

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The Royal Oasis –

Meeting Changing Student Needs

By James Jordan and Jennifer McNeil



Recognizing the changing needs of the student population of 140 children, the school team at Royal Charles Elementary in St Hubert, Quebec felt it imperative to adopt a school-wide approach to support some of the students. A major component of the school's annual success plan included improving student behaviour, diminishing out of class time and reducing the number of children sent to the office to receive a consequence. With the assistance of professionals from Riverside School Board's complementary services department the "Royal Oasis" was born and has been in operation since September 2019.

The Royal Oasis provides a calm, structured space which is designed to offer a wide variety of activities, both intervention and prevention based to promote social-emotional learning. Through collaborative practice, the Royal Charles team joined forces with members of RSB's complementary services team, not only to design the space, but also to identify and purchase intervention materials. In order to maximize the benefits for students visiting the space, school board professionals offered training on various research-based interventions and approaches that promote social-emotional learning.

The space serves as a tier of student support outside of the classroom in an intervention continuum,; designed to be utilized when interventions within the classroom do not suffice. Although the Royal Oasis is designed to offer guided support by a special education technician or attendant to the handicapped, it can also be used to offer respite to students who are feeling overwhelmed by the classroom environment and feel the need to remove themselves from the class for a short period. The space also serves as a lending "library" where teachers can borrow from a variety of intervention tools to gauge their effectiveness before making a classroom purchase.

“The Royal Oasis provides a calm, structured space which is designed to offer a wide variety of activities, both intervention and prevention based to promote social-emotional learning.”

Teachers play a key role in determining who needs this level of support and actively support those students in identifying optimal times to visit the Royal Oasis. With that said, self-regulation is promoted as students are encouraged to identify moments when time away from the busyness of classroom is necessary. Depending on their needs, the students that the room caters to does vary over time.

The path to the creation of the Royal Oasis was not obstacle free. The choice of space was the first obstacle to overcome. Royal Charles Elementary being housed in a small building, with no available free space, required a shift in the use of rooms used by the school’s daycare service. An office adjacent to the school’s main office – a space of ten square metres -

was transformed. *Mésure monies*, the Ministry of Education’s funding model, which allows Quebec schools to identify and fund local, needs, provided most of the financing. This was supplemented with some funds from the school’s operating budget and by donations of materials by the school’s parent community. A second obstacle involved moving from a consequence-based approach of student management towards the increased use of preventative measures. To a very few adults the space and some of the materials on hand looked a little too much like fun. A fuller understanding of the purpose of the space, the lighting, how materials were to be used and a greater comprehension of the role of the attendant and technician took place over a period of months.

Since its inception at the beginning of the school year, parent, student and school team response has been very positive. A growing number of students have become proactive and use the strategies that they were explicitly taught. The Royal Oasis uses an electronic logbook which tracks who has visited the room and the purpose of their visit. Far fewer students are removed from class as a consequence of inappropriate or disruptive classroom behaviour. Fewer students are seen at the office for a consequence. The number of student suspensions from school can be counted on one hand.

Plans for future development include refining the existing quiet spaces within the classrooms and offering academic support within the Royal Oasis. The school’s next major undertaking will be the development of interactive hallways and an understanding of how that resource can be used as part of the board supported practice of inclusion. ■



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Author Bios

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A Song of Inquiry: Data Use and School Improvement

By Dr. Pamela Adams and Dr. Carmen Mombourquette

The Nexus of Improvement and Data Use: An Inquiry Process

School improvement has been the song of politicians for multiple election cycles. In Canada, the 1980s have been identified as the zenith of attention to school effectiveness and school improvement (Sackney, 2007).

In many ways, Canada's entry into the third decade of the 21st Century remains characterized by public demand for fiscal accountability that contains refrains emanating from the school improvement song book. It is without question that schools should pay attention to the high notes, as well as the low, connected to the songs that often come across in results reports given to them by Minister of Education, School Board Chair, or Superintendent conductors. The thesis of this article is that teachers and principals in their roles as members of the chorus know how to effectively sing the songs associated with the provision of quality student learning, they, on many fronts, do not however have the time, energy, or desire to interpret what the words and notes of so many songs mean in the daily context of their school chorus.

The lovely metaphor of school improvement as a song quickly loses its allure when the reality of data identification, collection, interpretation, and use is woven into the tune. Do teachers and school principals have the requisite skill set to effectively use data in such a way that will lead to overall school improvement? Do teachers and principals have reason or inclination to care about externally generated data that arrives on their desks? Throughout her work, Amanda Datnow (see Datnow & Hubbard, 2015) has regularly noted that school personnel are mandated with the daunting task of using data to improve student academic results in areas such as standardized tests, literacy benchmarks, or parent survey results. However, she also notes that most educators are not often provided with the time, resources, and training necessary to effectively undertake this work of data collection and analysis. When improvements or gains occur, they may be more attributable to good luck than good planning.

In our work with teachers and principals in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia as well as the state of New South Wales in Australia, we have seen tremendous growth in school, school division, and family of school results once teachers and principals acquire requisite skills associated with setting inquiry based professional goals for themselves and their colleagues with whom they work.

It is expected practice for Alberta teachers and leaders to submit a yearly professional growth plan; in fact, through legislation, it is mandatory that they do so (Government of Alberta, 1998). These growth plans often focus on one or more goal statements that might include aspirations such as implementing a Circle of Friends model, differentiating literacy instruction, or initiating distributed leadership practices. Endeavors such as Circle of Friends (O'Connor, 2016), differentiated literacy (Tobin & McInnes, 2008), or distributed leadership (Harris, 2013) are laudable and worthy. School improvement literature supports their use. However, these goals intimate that those who set them are highly skilled in engaging with data use in ways that will indicate and lead to improved student learning and school improvement.



Our work with teachers and school leaders involves a deeper dive into the process of school improvement that requires them to:

- Reflect on their confidence in meeting relevant standards of practice. In Alberta teachers reflect on the Teaching Quality Standard (Government of Alberta, 2018b) and principals reflect

on the Leadership Quality Standard (Government of Alberta, 2018a).

- Focus next steps on relevant competencies embedded in the respective standard.
- As individuals, and then in pairs and small groups, identify and explicate relevant school and school division goals for education.

- Assess learning needs of children in the school.

- After review of competencies, school goals, and student learning needs, develop a goal for professional growth. Then, in small teams, develop team based professional goal.

- Turn the goal statements into professional inquiry questions.

- Develop strategies and timelines for the professional work that will lead to answering the professional inquiry questions.

- Identify evidence that will be collected throughout the year that will aide in answering professional inquiry questions.

- Spend the year working closely with students, colleagues, and extended community to identify types and levels of impact on student learning and overall school improvement.

- Every 30 to 45 days teachers meet with principal (and/or other school leaders) and speak to what they have been doing to answer their inquiry questions: what they have been learning about themselves and students, the evidence that they have to support their learning, and what they will be doing in the next 30 to 45 days to move their inquiry forward. Principals follow a similar process with a central office leader who visits the school every 30 to 45 days. (see Adams, Mombourquette, & Townsend, 2019)

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Does this process contribute to overall school improvement? We have evidence to suggest that it does. In Alberta, all schools receive a report from the Ministry of Education called the Annual Education Results Report (AERR) (Alberta Education, 2016). The AERR provides schools with data relevant to areas such as student, parent, and teacher satisfaction; provincial achievement and diploma exam results; rates of post-secondary transition; and high school graduation rates. In one school authority in which we recently spent three years embedding the above described process, 12 of 16 areas in their AERR report increased.

Worthy of particular note were the 'improved significantly' designation for areas associated with student drop out rate (decreased) and increased high school graduation rates. This school authority also increased significantly in the overall reporting category called 'school improvement' which was a composite of survey data and academic results achieved over the three-year timeframe.

The undergirding assumption of conscious competence (Adams, Mombourquette, & Townsend, 2019) combined with a process that encourages a purposeful examination of data to answer professional inquiry questions can lead to improved student learning. Collectively, the focus on data within the school community becomes real and very professionally personal. This personalization of data interpretation can

support teachers and principals becoming much more purposeful in addressing gaps in learning and overall school improvement noted in the various external accountability reports. Educators then can attend to the work of school improvement with a heightened clarity of purpose. They, in essence, become maestros of the music and very adept at making a beautiful sound in the concert known as school improvement. ■

Author Bios

Dr. Pamela Adams was an educator in public schools for 17 years before joining the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge in 1996, teaching at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. Over the past five years, she has conducted collaborative inquiry research in 9 school authorities and over 150 schools, investigating themes of school and organizational leadership, teaching effectiveness, school improvement, inquiry-based professional growth, and essential conditions for professional learning.

Dr. Carmen Mombourquette is an Associate Professor of Education specializing in Educational Leadership at the University of Lethbridge. For many years he was an elementary, junior high school, and high school principal in Alberta and Ontario.

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