



PrincipalConnections

Winter 2023 • Volume 27 • Issue 2

The magazine of Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario



Social Responsibility

JILL GOWDIE
A Soul Pedagogy

MAUDE BARLOW
Tackling the Global Water Crisis

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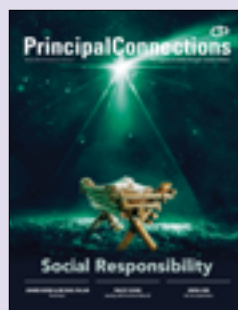
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Cover design by Erika Futuyama

We thank all those who contributed to this issue. Please note, however, that the opinions and views expressed are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of CPCO. Similarly, the acceptance of advertising does not imply CPCO endorsement.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40035635

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FROM THE PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michael MacPherson, Joseph Geiser

Encounters on the Road of Faithful Leadership

In the document *Renewing the Promise – A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education 2018*, there is a brief story about Jesus on the Road to Emmaus:

Jesus encounters and accompanies the disciples in this Gospel story. We are reminded that He is always present in our lives. Walking alongside the disciples, Jesus engages them in dialogue and in teaching, and in doing so, nurtures their relationship. Jesus restores the joy of believing in the hearts of these disciples by revealing himself in the breaking of the bread and through his enduring presence, friendship and unconditional love. Our Christ-centred Catholic schools have the ability to offer the same experience of inviting joyful discipleship for staff, students and families. (Page 5)

As we reflect on this story of responsibility, nurturing and accompaniment, what are the lessons that we, as Catholic leaders, can learn and bring to all those we encounter on our own leadership journey?

Lead with Purpose

School leaders inspire students, staff, parents, caregivers and community to embrace their God-given potential. Leadership involves building of support and understanding for others.

Accompaniment

Like Jesus accompanying the disciples, school leaders accompany students and help find pathways and bridges, all in an effort to lend guidance, empathy and wisdom on their journey.

The Common Good

Catholic social teaching emphasizes all of humanity. We must work to promote life, dignity and the common good. From the rights of workers, the future of the environment and the needs of the poor, we must, as schools, be at the front of this work in our communities.

Community of Care

The image of Jesus walking and conversing with disciples on the road to Emmaus models accompaniment. This type of care is central to Catholic education, where educators not only share knowledge but also help students, families and caregivers to discover the deeper meaning of their lives.

Faith through Service

Our Christian faith is a story of encounter, love and hope. By nurturing a sense of belonging and purpose within the community, leaders create an environment where faith is alive. This translates to supporting those in our community who are in need.

Schools have the power to inspire students to become leaders themselves. By modelling responsibility and a commitment to the common good,

schools encourage students to mentor the next generation of leaders.

As we journey through Advent, our prayer is that all of you will be blessed by the magnificent birth of our Lord and Saviour. Merry Christmas. May God bless you during this most holy time of the year.

By nurturing a sense of belonging and purpose within the community, leaders create an environment where faith is alive. This translates to supporting those in our community who are in need.



FROM THE EDITOR

Deirdre Kinsella Biss

Rethinking Social Responsibility

The desire to be involved and make the world a better place is a hopeful, worthy goal for all our students. As we close out 2023, we face an uncertain period in education, peppered with many unprecedented demands, complicated needs and multi-faceted challenges. As educators, we are tasked with providing an education for our students that helps them create lasting changes in the world they live in.

We must believe that one person can make a difference. An individual can act autonomously and can simultaneously participate and collaborate with others in their communities. Either way, our students need to feel a sense of agency. They must understand the big picture, think about others when making decisions, be able to identify and respect human rights, develop accountable and transparent practices in both thought and action, and strive to address all forms of inequity, exclusion and marginalization.

Socially aware students of 2024 need to contribute to the well-being of others. They have a role to play in climate change and must have pro-environment attitudes. Knowing how to advocate and participate in social justice activities is key. Contributing to the betterment of both the local and global communities is vital.

In this edition of *Principal Connections*, we delve into the changing faces of social responsibility and examine some of the social issues our students currently encounter.

Our edition begins with a message from Archbishop Francis Leo. He ignites our thinking by calling to mind the social responsibility we have in our schools. He reminds us of the background and familial realities we work closely with daily in our communities. He invites us to be the light for others.

Jill Gowdie shines light on the need for spiritual responsibility. She promotes learning through the teaching of *soul pedagogy*. Her article takes a closer look

at dimensions of Catholic school life that invite deeper possibilities for impact. Jill describes a ‘head, heart and hands’ methodology where pathways to the soul are given focus, guidance and space.

Maude Barlow identifies the crucial role educators must play in tackling the global water crisis. She shares insights about “blue consciousness” and the Blue Schools Network. She feels it is crucial to give young people hope they can do something about these huge environmental challenges.

Ann E. Lopez identifies the need for a curriculum that fosters critical thinking, creativity, partnerships and community engagement. She posits that educators must collaborate with students to develop and co-create understandings of what is meant by social responsibility, and how this connects to their lived experiences and communities.

Josh Fullan identifies the actual institution of “school” as the ultimate social responsibility. He advocates that students are yearning for a moral calling through meaningful learning. He suggests that a reflection on the “why” of schools is in order.

Student identity plays a role in dealing with social responsibility as it can provide a sense of security and belonging for young people. In *Promoting Identities in Schools*, Dennis Shirley and Andy Hargreaves discuss students’ personal qualities, the need for inclusion and the social issues associated with this new age of identity.

Rethinking our current understanding of social responsibility is timely. In the true spirit of Christmas, as we look to the New Year, we must work with students to promote a culture of inclusion, peace and non-violence in our schools. Rethinking attitudes and lifestyles is essential. 2024 calls for students to be socially responsible to themselves, their communities and the wider society. This is our gift to them.



December 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I wish to express my profound gratitude for the work of Catholic Principals throughout Ontario. You continue to nurture publicly-funded Catholic schools, providing leadership and guidance to staff and students across the province.

As we experience the joy of Advent and prepare for the birth of the Christ-child, we know that there are many distractions competing for our attention, not all of them healthy and life-giving.

The beauty of this blessed season is that, from a faith perspective, we are asked to slow down and focus on the simplicity of life. We think especially of the Advent wreath and the candles we light each week in anticipation of the birth of Jesus. This is a profound reminder that a simple ray of light can illuminate an otherwise dark room. How can we be that light for others during Advent in our homes, schools and parishes? How do we bring the light of Christ to others in their darkness?

Following our Advent journey, we have the joy of Christmas. The Saviour of the World was not born in a five-star luxury hotel. The baby Jesus was placed in the manger by Mother Mary, a simple act of tremendous love.

I pray that each one of you experiences these simple moments in your faith journey, especially through the Advent season this year. Do take a moment to step back, reflect, pray and give thanks for the abundance of blessings that have been bestowed upon us.

In his 2022 Christmas message, Pope Francis remarked: *“Jesus is born in our midst; He is God with us. He comes to accompany our daily lives, to share with us in all things: our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears. He comes as a helpless child. He is born in the cold night, poor among the poor. In need of everything, he knocks at the door of our heart to find warmth and shelter.”*

In your role as principals, you work closely with children who come from so many different experiences, backgrounds and familial realities. Who will knock at the door of their hearts this Christmas season? May we find time to accompany these children in the same way that Jesus walks with us each day. Let us also follow the example of the Blessed Mother, devoted in faith, care and love.

Wishing the joy of Advent and Christmas to you and your loved ones. Be assured of my continued prayers.

Yours Sincerely in Jesus with Mary,

Most Rev. Francis Leo
Archbishop of Toronto



A Soul Pedagogy

By Dr. Jill Gowdie

The planet is melting, the political world is polarized, the social fabric is frayed, the global economy is volatile, and the future feels more uncertain than ever for our young people.

As if to underline the impact of the dislocation in which our children are growing up, the latest statistics (2023) in both Australia and Canada show suicide to be the second leading cause of death (after unintentional injury) among those aged 15 - 34. There is reason enough to believe these alarming figures to be connected to the increasing prevalence of a 'buffered' self (first coined by Charles Taylor, 2008) and a contemporaneous falling away of hope (discussed in Newton, 2022) ¹.

In the midst of this, and because of this, we, who walk beside our young people, teaching, guiding and engaging them in life itself, carry a concern for them that surges far beyond the classroom and the school community. We are invested in their future, the flourishing of their lives, the fulfilment of the possibility we see in each of them.

We are often challenged ourselves by the disenchantment in the world, and stretched by the tension between the need to help our young people find a deep sense of belonging in the world and the educational task of equipping them for learning success in the world. And in the pressures of performativity and accountability, sometimes the former is lost in the latter.

The Arc of Student Formation Experiences

If we could trace the arc of engagement in student formation experiences from the time a student begins at a Catholic school to the moment a student graduates from a Catholic school, we ought to be able to see a sequential, developmental, holistic and integrated pathway of engagement that encompasses retreats, service learning and immersions.

As with prayer and ritual, this dimension also requires attention and careful planning so that it does not become an incidental, repetitive, unimodal calendar activity in student experience, but rather remains the meaning-making space where the Gospel comes alive, Jesus becomes real, and calling becomes personal.

With careful mapping and resourcing (including the formation of teachers) we would see the student formation 'curriculum' include a wide range of head, heart and hand engagement strategies respecting the variety of spiritual entry points needed for a diverse group: reflective, visual, aural and kinaesthetic.

We would see in the Reflection and Retreat days skilful facilitation to help students go deeper into self, soul and the sacred; to know themselves to be utterly loved and to find deep belonging and affirmation of their unique being in the world; to find wells of hope and meaning in the treasury of Christian spirituality; and to find God at the centre of being, bidden or unbidden.

We would see in the Service Learning experiences skilful facilitation to help students engage in the process of not just doing for, but being with, in real-time human relationship with the lost, the least and the left out. And seeing there, Christ, in the eyes of another, whether rich or dispossessed, old or young, whole or broken. This is what Pope Francis calls the creation of "a caravan of solidarity ... of finding God in every human being" (EG, 92).

In Immersions, we would see students knowing deeply what solidarity means, why integral ecology is the



response demanded of us; how the language of dialogue and encounter is the bridge to peace; and what the common good asks in the giving of self.

Powerfully, each and all of the formation experiences a student receives would amplify the essential Catholic beliefs that everyone is made in the image of God; that Catholic social teaching is the scaffold for a just and inclusive society; and that integral ecology provides a holistic way of understanding the call to care in the connected web of creation of which we are a part. As Johann Baptist Metz put it so well about a Catholic spirituality: "This is not a mysticism of closed eyes, but rather a mysticism of open eyes, which becomes a mysticism of helping hands" (Kasper, 2015).

For every one of us the truth is you can hope for more, strive for more, be more, only when you deeply know you are enough – in who you are right now.

This is the foundational message every one of our students needs to hear – 'You are enough.'

Beautiful. Loved. Enough.

And that nothing you could ever do will make you fall out of the hand of God.

Let this be our Christmas message. [✚](#)

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¹(Note: In 2021/2022, statistics for Canadian young people showed a sharp decline in hopefulness compared to 2016 and coincided with a steady decline in mental health among youth. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220517/dq220517d-eng.htm>)



Tackling the Global Water Crisis

By Maude Barlow

The Crisis

Planet Earth is running out of accessible clean water. This is something we were all taught could never happen as there is a finite amount of water on our planet that we thought would never run out.

Unfortunately, we humans have diverted, dammed, mismanaged, polluted and over-extracted our freshwater heritage so relentlessly that the United Nations calls water scarcity the “scourge of the earth” and warns us that within 10 years, demand will outstrip supply by 40 per cent.

Not surprisingly in our deeply inequitable world, many do without while others have abundance. One quarter of the world’s population does not have access to clean drinking water and one half does not have access to adequate sanitation.

Many Canadians think we are immune from this crisis. We have what I call the “myth of abundance,” believing we have so much water we can afford to be cavalier about it. As a result, we have been slow to protect our water heritage in law and practice. We would do well to remember it is only in the last few years that the lack of clean water in Indigenous communities has been

Students as Agents of Change

By Ann E. Lopez



We are living in a time of change across the globe.

From demographic shifts caused by people moving across borders, climate change that has caused disasters and displaced people, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are witnessing global change. This change is reflected in our schools through greater diversity and the need for curriculum and pedagogy that prepares students for a changing world.

At the same time, we are witnessing a rise in populism, fascism, intolerance, white supremacy, the proliferation of fake news and challenges to truth. And given the emergence of the anti-woke (woke a term appropriated from African American Vernacular English, meaning

being awake to social injustices) movement, we are also seeing increased intolerance towards diversity and difference and hate towards certain communities, rise in anti-LGBTQIA2A+ racism, anti-Black racism and anti-Asian racism.

In this environment, educators are faced with the task of supporting students to understand their role as socially responsible citizens. There are growing calls to develop curriculum that foster critical thinking, creativity beyond subject content knowledge and challenge all forms of oppression and injustices (Lopez, 2021).

The current contexts that exist in Canada and other countries require students to develop their own abilities

Promoting Identity in Schools: 12 Principles to Advance Inclusion and Equity

By Dennis Shirley and Andy Hargreaves

Who do you think you are? This question is usually meant as a challenge. If you think about it, though, it can also be a call for introspection about your identity. This holds special urgency for all educators now.

These days, you can hardly go to a school board meeting or check your social media feed without learning about a controversy related to identity issues. What should educators do when they are told to remove library books that some have deemed “inappropriate?” What are leaders risking when they declare their reservations about the content of antibias training? What about the U.S. teacher who was fired for questioning her school system’s ban on the popular song “Rainbowland” that advocates for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion?

Educators are on the front lines of a new Age of Identity. It’s a time when an innocent misstep can not only lead to a serious dressing-down by the powers that be. It may even get you fired or lose you a job offer that you thought you had in the bag.

We first recognized the educational importance of identity in our work with 10 boards organized in a consortium organized by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education. We learned how identity matters for all young people and their teachers because it can provide a sense of security and belonging. Most of all, we found, it matters for those who are stigmatized or patronized because of one aspect of their identity, like their race, religion or disability.

Since then, identity issues have become not just a concerned focus for greater inclusion. They have turned into a tinder box of politicized emotion. The issues have become so intense, polarized and complicated, that many leaders don’t know what to do.

In response, our new book, *The Age of Identity: Who Do Our Kids Think They Are ... and How Do We Help Them Belong?* sets out 12 principles to help school leaders steer discussions into and through the identity storms they are confronting.





The principles fall into three clusters that leaders can use to organize discussions in their schools.

Cluster #1: Three principles of *sympathy*, *bravery* and *solidarity* can lead educators and communities to ask: How shall we undertake the important work of promoting our students' identities, even when this is difficult and acrimonious? What drives us? What is our purpose? How can we truly feel for and feel with those who suffer unnecessarily in our classrooms, schools and societies? How can we stand up courageously for the lives of others who are marginalized, excluded and oppressed, even when we are faced with criticism, conflict and opposition?

Cluster #2 addresses the principles of *dignity*, *generosity*, *forgiveness*, *civility*, *humility* and *irony*. These are about how to be and how to live together as we engage in difficult deliberations regarding equity and inclusion. Our identities are often complex. All of us have multiple identities and should never be stereotyped according to just one or two of them. Also, though we want curriculum texts to be inclusive of all kinds of identities, we usually ignore mixed racial heritages, forcing children to belong to one category or another that may misrepresent them. Sometimes, our identities may even be conflicted. We seek full integration of newcomer identities, for example, only to find that some of these can be patriarchal or can mistreat others who don't have cisgender identities. Most of us try to do the right thing but we may then find we are often unintentionally implicated in the very exclusions and oppressions we want to resolve. It's in just these difficult moments when we most need guiding principles.

Cluster #3 comprises three culminating principles of *authenticity*, *rationality* and *practicality* that are touchstones of engagement with those around us. These compel us to investigate: How do we draw honestly and reflectively on our own life experiences, including our own wounds, as well as on science and evidence, to uplift all our students? How do we address all these things, not just as ideals or abstractions, but in practical terms that will work in the here and now?

The controversies that school leaders are facing aren't going away. Banning books and songs, or censoring colleagues who express dissident opinions, may offer short-term retribution for some, but will not open people up or bring them together. A better approach is to search for things we have in common, appreciate and learn from our differences, be honest about where each of us has fallen short, and make amends when we do. *The Age of Identity* calls on us to be our best selves. Let's come together and use these 12 principles to ensure that all our young people can thrive in the fullness of their identities. [CP](#)

Dennis Shirley

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Dennis and Andy's book, *The Age of Identity: Who do our kids think they are ... and how do we help them belong*, is published by Corwin Press.



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Schools as Social Responsibility

By Josh Fullan



Early in 2021, at the peak of coronavirus infections in Canada, a pattern emerged in the self-reported data on how students were responding emotionally to pandemic conditions. The pattern manifested as an inverse correlation between what seemed to be two countervailing forces: as many students' engagement in school decreased, their feelings of empathy and social responsibility went up. The data were telling us that kids were bored by school but compelled by life. Or in other words, as the world unraveled around them and the anchor of school was lifted, they felt a moral calling.

I saw this trend first in our research at Maximum City with thousands of children and youth across Canada (see <https://maximumcity.ca/wellbeing>), then in some international reports, and anecdotally in my own Toronto neighborhood when a kid I had never seen before came by our house in the middle of a school day to clear our sidewalk after a snowfall. Like a lot of young people during the pandemic, he had gained more freedom and wanted something to do. He wanted *to help*. And he was claiming a small bit of agency by canvassing strangers on nearby snow-covered streets with a shovel taller than him.

Now, late in 2023, schools have reverted to their old pre-pandemic ways except for some tinkering in the margins. A typical classroom in December of 2023 looks and sounds hardly different from a classroom of December 2019, and not radically different from a classroom of 50 or 100 years earlier for that matter. The return of school as we have known it for more than a century is both a comfort and additional evidence of one of modern society's most stubborn constants. The world turns, empires fall, disease kills, forests burn, innovations disrupt, school endures.

Something else that endures is the heightened sense of social responsibility in many young people. The instinct of that kid with the shovel to do good in adverse conditions is still percolating across a generation. I have seen it in persuasive action at the hyper-local level and at scale in districts, and share just two examples here.

This summer, I spent 10 days working with a cohort of 40 Canadian and German teenagers on a big question: how can public space in cities enhance democratic principles and enable civic participation? With democracy in crisis in many places around the world, and the fragile cohesion

Respect, Reverence and Responsibility

By Dawn Wemigwans, Raymond Trudeau and Vince Pawis

“It can be easy to say the words Truth and Reconciliation, but it’s important to reconcile what really happened and understand why working together for a better future is so important for all of us. School partnerships provide spiritual, linguistic and cultural guidance to help all people heal. Healing is not just for Indigenous people, it’s for all people – the teachings encompass everyone.”

Elder Vince Pawis, White Buffalo Road Healing Lodge

Meaningful, true and equitable partnerships between schools and First Nation organizations strengthen the education system, and in turn, strengthen society. Social responsibility, in relation to fostering meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities, must always start by accepting and acknowledging the historical injustices and systemic obstacles that existed throughout Canadian history to the detriment of Indigenous peoples. It is imperative that these partnerships recognize and respect traditional ways of knowing and being with a deep and honest commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and culture and language preservation and revitalization.

The word “truth” in the term Truth and Reconciliation has deep, significant historical meaning and includes several key elements. When school systems are able

to recognize “truth,” they are actively acknowledging historical injustices such as colonization, the theft of lands via unscrupulous means, the annihilation of traditional languages, forced assimilation and cultural oppression. Truth means recognizing and honouring the value and importance of traditional ways of being and ways of learning. Truth means acknowledging the discriminatory laws and governmental and church policies that were historically part of Canadian society. Truth means better understanding the importance and connection to the land and how resource extraction and loss of land negatively affected not only individuals but whole community structures. When truth is understood and recognized, then acts of reconciliation are more meaningful and potentially life-changing for all.

Active reconciliation in schools must focus foremost on Indigenous voices, that of students, families and the greater Indigenous community. When school and Indigenous partnerships succeed, they actively address the impacts of colonization and can be considered the core of the next steps of reconciliation.

At St. David Catholic School in Sudbury, Ontario, school staff work in close partnerships with many local First Nation organizations and knowledge keepers. The school is fortunate to partner with groups such as



with slight modifications needed at the end. Students learned related words in Anishinaabemowin such as “Mina Aki Giizhigad” (Happy Earth Day), how to respectfully harvest natural resources and the many ways to create an efficient floating vessel. The assembly of the boats involving the tying of knots turned out to be a slight challenge, but the students' creativity and a couple of elastics ended up being a great solution to this obstacle. Great teamwork, open communication and a positive mindset led the students on a fun and messy day of boat racing.

The competition day was beautiful, with lots of cheering, dancing, music and wonderful sunshine. There were many proud moments seeing the students' kind spirits and hearing the non-stop laughter. Students consistently supported each other's new learning, and visibly demonstrated the Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings:

LOVE (Zaagidwin): Expressing love through kind words and actions.

RESPECT (Mnaadendmowin): Respect is an attitude of maintaining a positive mindset.

COURAGE (Aakwade'ewin): Listen to your heart and do what is right.

HUMILITY (Dbaadendiziwin): Think of others before yourself.

HONESTY (Gwekwaadiziwin): Speak from your heart and always tell the truth.

WISDOM (Nbwaakaawin): Everyone has a special gift. Show wisdom by using your gift for good.

TRUTH (Debwewin): Living the truth is living the Seven Grandfather Teachings.



Through the sharing of Indigenous shkaabewis (kindness) teachings and the sharing of meanings behind related Anishinaabemowin words and phrases, the learning culture of the classroom quickly transformed into kindness and respect for one another. Students also began showing greater care and respect toward Shkakamik Kwe (Mother Earth). The overall natural increase in visible kindness was a serendipitous, yet not unexpected, result of the Mitigook Kinoomaage Gamig partnership.

Education can be a strong starting place for societal growth, and it should reflect the rich diversity of the community it serves. The social responsibility of schools and school boards involves actively engaging with communities to create lasting positive change. In the context of working with Indigenous communities and partners, social responsibility takes on a unique dimension, as it necessitates a profound respect for Indigenous ways of being and traditional knowledge and knowledge keepers.

Partnerships that seek a path toward healing in a way that recognizes, respects and infuses traditional First Nation ways of being help to build a more inclusive, resilient school community and a sustainable future for all. [CP](#)



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EVENT SCHEDULE

Thursday, April 18:

- Opening Mass
- Keynote: Richard Gerver
- Entertainment and Hospitality
- Social

Friday, April 19:

- Breakfast
- Opening Liturgy
- Keynote: Gloria Purvis
- Wellness and Networking
- Lunch
- Keynote: Dr. Jody Carrington
- Prizes and Draws

Keynote Speakers



Gloria Purvis



Jody Carrington



Richard Gerver

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:16

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Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony

Friday, April 19

Join us as we recognize our administrators, Catholic partners and other influential members of the Catholic Community who have made outstanding contributions to Catholic Education, CPCO and their respective school boards.



Equity as Solidarity

By Santiago Rincón-Gallardo

Let me start with the dark part. I promise it won't be long. We are in times of collapse: environmental, societal, political, financial collapse. This is not an opinion, but a historically and scientifically validated claim.¹ We can verify this if we dare to pay attention to the world around us. Looking at the tremendous suffering, death, loss and destruction of these times is extremely difficult. And yet only by paying attention to the moment we are in can we make wise and smart decisions on who and how to be in the world.

In the midst of the overwhelming uncertainty and confusion, it's easy to fall into despair and depression, get sucked into the allure of distraction, succumb to the survival instinct of shielding ourselves from the outside world in a desperate attempt to protect ourselves and those closest to us. Or, as Margaret Wheatley invites us to do, we can choose to become warriors for the human spirit: leaders who, in the midst of the darkness, create islands of sanity that protect, nurture, and help grow the flame of the human spirit.²

There is a clear bifurcation in how human activity is being organized. In one direction are relationships of domination and control: some groups over others; nation-States over citizens; humans over nature; profit over everything else. In the other direction are relationships of care, solidarity, interdependence and freedom. Whether intentionally or not, what we think, say and do can contribute to the consolidation of one direction or the

other. Domination and control dehumanize – in order to dominate and control others you have to see them as less human than you. Care, solidarity and interdependence humanize. It is when we interact with each other and with nature on equal grounding, in the understanding that no human is worth more than any other, or than any other form of life, that we become fully human.

Equity has been a fundamental value of education and education policies since the second half of the 20th century, after the end of World War II. The creation of the United Nations Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights complemented the defence of individual civil and political liberties of the 18th century enlightenment with collective rights. Positive discrimination in favour of the disadvantaged has been accepted in the constitutions of most countries today, as it is understood that equity – balancing the playing field so that those historically dispossessed and marginalized have comparable opportunities for growth and development to anyone else's – is fundamental for the construction of healthy contemporary societies.

It would be hard not to see and understand the importance of equity. It makes perfect sense to stand behind it and promote it. Yet, there is a fundamental problem with how equity has been understood and practised in most nations and educational systems around the world, a problem with direct implications for the quest of keeping the human spirit alive. It is equity



Where the Happiest Live

By Dr. Jody Carrington

Here's the truth – if you're not okay, the teachers you lead and the kids you teach might not be either.

Kids tend to be only as okay as the people who hold them. I've been a psychologist for nearly 20 years, and something I think a lot about is just how unhappy people seem to be. I don't think I've ever met anyone who is "happy" all the time. Uplifting, right? Turns out, a general, all-encompassing "happy with everything, all the time" is a dumb ideal. Yet, this illusive goal of happiness seems to be what everyone else has and what we all (including me) seem to want.

I've spent a lot of time in my career just sitting with emotions (mostly other people's because that is so much easier). For the past decade, I've written a few books about it all, and now spend most of my time speaking to organizations around the globe, all of whom are on this quest to be happier and less burned out. There seems to be consensus across this planet that the "good" emotions – related to the way many of us feel when we hear the word "happy" – seem to be the preferred states, not only for ourselves but especially for the people we love and the kids we serve. For those we truly love and teach, we would often sacrifice so much and protect their happiness at almost any cost.

This desire for happiness seems to be most heavily wished upon our children. I've said many times, "The only thing I ever want for my kids is for them just to be happy." Conversely, the opposite of this happiness goal is often the reason we sever relationships: "I'm just not

happy anymore;" or, "My job brings me no happiness." As divorce rates rise and workplace burnout abounds, I often wonder: Is anybody really happy?

Cracking the Happiness Code Is a Big Deal

We want to know about this happy thing so badly that the scientific study of happiness has exploded over the past three decades. Nobel Prize winners Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton are leading researchers, as is renowned psychologist Martin Seligman. One of the most prominent in this happiness space of experts is researcher Shawn Achor, who says there is a "happiness advantage" to those who see the world from the perspective of happy. Positive emotions make us more productive, healthier, more creative, and better able to process information. From children performing better on tasks, to doctors making better – and quicker – diagnoses, to lower absenteeism in the workplace, Achor asserts that those of us who are happy simply do better.

It appears this mind shift from all the things that could go wrong to all the things that could go right is critical. I'm interested, however, in the process that underlies this shift and the nagging belief that, regardless of how much time you get to spend in the positive space, the other side of emotion is often equally and maybe even more important. It's not necessarily just about being happy that makes us most fulfilled. What if it has much more to do with feeling all the emotions? Often, we have learned to simply bury them.



An Expectation of Justice

By Michael Saver and Monica Godin

Created in response to the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning (1995), the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs) were released in the 1998-1999 school year to provide a framework representing the distinctiveness and purpose of Catholic education in Ontario.¹

The OCSGEs highlight that Ontario Catholic schools have a dual mandate. They must address both the curricular and learning expectations of the Ministry of Education and the spiritual formation of students as whole persons within the Roman Catholic tradition. To highlight the foundational relationship between spirituality and learning, the seven OCSGEs detail the

essential knowledge and skills, as well as the Christian values that must be understood and lived out in action. Together, the OCSGEs present a vision of the learner in Catholic schools.

More than 25 years later, the Graduate Expectations continue to articulate how the Gospel calls students, and all Catholic persons, to an explicit commitment to social responsibility. Each of the seven OCSGEs is succinctly described, and then broken open to detail a number of ways that a commitment to that expectation may be lived. In 2019, the preface and afterward were revised to reflect current context and updated resources.

Every time, we reach out to the “dear neighbour in need” as our founders, the Sisters of St. Joseph, have done for 172 years, we put others at the centre of our care and feel the joy of giving. Every time we slow down to breathe and be mindful of all with which we have been blessed, we act from a grateful heart. So, whether it is visiting with elderly sisters to share inter-generational friendship, collecting canned foods for St. Francis table or celebrating PRIDE month, I have witnessed how these and other actions directly lead to what the Catholic Graduate Expectations promise – a meaningful life of joy that heals the world because we have responded to the deep hunger of that world. [CP](#)

Michael Saver, OCT M. Div. has been an educator and facilitator for over 35 years, including 19 years with the Toronto Catholic District School Board and eight years as Administrator for the Accreditation of Teacher Education programs at the Ontario College of Teachers. Mike’s particular area of expertise is building trust and collaboration in professional communities. He has 22 years’ experience as a Courage to Teach facilitator with the Center for Courage and Renewal in the United States founded by Parker J. Palmer. Mike had the opportunity to introduce the Circle of Trust® program to Canada and currently leads programs for the Center internationally.

Monica Godin, OCT M. R. E. has taught Religion to secondary students for 30 years in both Durham and Toronto Catholic School Boards and has also served as chaplaincy team leader for most of those years. She is the director and instructs for the Religious Education in Catholic Schools AQ course for OECTA/TCDSB and taught the Teaching in Catholic Schools course at York University’s Faculty of Education for five years. She currently works at St. Joseph’s College School where she also moderates the student GSA.

¹The OCSGEs can be found at <https://iceont.ca/resources/ocsg/>

²Renewing the Promise, ACBO, p. 11 quoted in The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations p.8

³OCSGEs p. 11

⁴Catechism of the Catholic Church. Article Six. Moral Conscience

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Green at Fifteen

By Andreas Schleicher



Since 2006, PISA has been tracking what 15-year-old students know about the science of the environment, and how they care about the environment. Importantly, students' knowledge about the science of the environment and their engagement for the environment are closely related.

That's why education matters so much. In PISA, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Program for International Student Assessment, students with poorer knowledge and skills around environmental science often reported an almost naïve optimism that the environmental challenges will go away by themselves. This is not surprising. A better science education enables students to more realistically

assess the magnitude of the environmental challenges that lie ahead. It also helps them apply ethical reasoning, to consider consequences and evaluate externality, and to accept that science does not give direct answers for decision-making but requires ethical and value-driven considerations.

The world demands bold action to meet the global goal of net zero emissions by 2050. Education has a pivotal role to prepare us for a greener future; to foster sustainability, keeping the world we know in balance, while also promoting resilience, helping us to live in an increasingly imbalanced world. It can help us make better trade-offs between the present and the future, and between situational values – I will do whatever the



Misalignment between students' enthusiasm for the environment and their propensity to take action is less likely to occur when students are in close contact with school peers or parents involved in environmental actions. The results from PISA show students are more likely to engage in environmental actions if they are enrolled in schools where other students are also involved in environmental actions. The extent to which other students in the school are involved in environmental actions is one of the most consistent factors in preventing environmental misalignment. At school, friends and peers serve as social networks that share information on environmental issues and provide encouragement and concrete opportunities for students to actively participate. Environmental activities at school that motivate not only individual engagement but the participation of groups of students and the entire student community are promising. All this suggests that environmental education initiatives should target school communities as a whole.

Education needs to do better in helping students develop a sense of self-efficacy, agency and responsibility. Only in this way can young people unleash their knowledge and energy to build sustainable cities, start sustainable businesses, push the innovation frontier

for green technologies, rethink individual lifestyles, back ecologically responsible policy making, and, most importantly, strike the right balance between meeting the needs of the present and safeguarding the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Some will say the climate challenge is far too urgent to place all our hopes on the next generation. And yes, that is true. But the sluggish progress we are seeing with changes in public awareness and the behaviour of adults when it comes to the environment show how much harder it is to unlearn comfortable beliefs and habits than to get it right from the start. An excellent education in environmental science, building itself on a foundation of the education sciences, will serve the hopes and aspirations of individuals, economies and nations. It will improve and save many lives and is one of the great investments a society can make in its people and its future. Today's school students are just a small share of our populations, but they are 100% of our future. Our goal – all our students green at 15. [CP](#)

Andreas Schleicher

Director of Education and Skills,
Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development(OECD)

Climate Migration: Teach Us and We'll Respond

By Molly Sloan Gill

As a first-year student attending Dalhousie University, I am increasingly aware of an omission in our educational system: the lack of in-depth discussions and lessons on climate migration and its profound relevance to students worldwide. In an era where the impacts of climate change have become overwhelmingly evident this vital topic is largely missing from our curriculum.

Climate migration, often referred to as *climate displacement*, is an issue that cannot be overstated in its importance to today's society. While it is difficult to comprehend the entirety of this problem, the consequences are far-reaching and vast in their impacts. One of the most pressing challenges we face is the displacement of individuals and communities due to environmental factors. Yet our education system has done little to teach students that the climate crisis and migration are about more than increasing sea levels, extreme weather events and deforestation. Climate migration involves complicated social, economic and political aspects that require our attention and knowledge.

Students deserve to have faith in our educational system as a beacon of enlightenment and knowledge, providing us with the means to grasp and analyze the world's most serious challenges. Climate migration is a prime example of such a challenge. As a student myself, I question why it is often overshadowed by more traditional topics when this issue dictates the entirety of our futures. It is not enough to have a brief mentions of climate change in Grade 9 geography classes or in global studies courses. Climate migration deserves recognition, and more importantly, a solution. To do this, we need an interdisciplinary approach, including geography, environmental science, sociology, economics and especially political science.

Students are not oblivious to the relevance of climate migration in today's society. We're witnessing massive waves of displacement and migration because of





Giving Voice to Social Responsibility

By Stephen Hurley

Will we continue to see the poor primarily as problems to be solved ... or as a privileged source of God's presence and salvation, especially in our times?

Fr. Paul Lennon, former Executive Director,
Catholic Charities

For many of those working daily in the province's schools – school leaders, teachers, support workers – the issues around systemic inequity and injustice, which have been taken up with much more intensity over the past few years, can seem somewhat overwhelming. And, at times, impossible to tackle.

The book clubs, webinars, conferences and, yes, even podcasts that have been instrumental in proclaiming a vision, which we hope to realize One Day, don't always offer the actionable steps that educators and school leaders need for Monday.

As a podcast host and producer, I've found myself thinking more and more about that important, if confounding, space between One Day- and Monday-thinking, and how, while continuing to develop content that recognizes the importance of the broader vision for equity and justice, we might start to give more voice to the folks who are trying to mobilize this vision in their own school communities.

I believe that the concept of social responsibility, the theme of this *Principal Connections* edition, is precisely what we need in order to help us bring the broader visions for equity and justice in public education right to the doorstep of our local school community.

Interestingly, my clearest thinking about social responsibility did not come from the launch of a new education podcast. Instead, it was sparked by a series of

recent interviews with Michael Fullan, (no, the other Michael Fullan), recently retired Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto (CCAT). As part of a larger project that will highlight the work of member agencies, Michael and I spent some time together recording thoughts and memories from his 30-year history as leader of CCAT.

It was in preparation for my time with Michael that I encountered the words of Fr. Paul Lennon, which led off this article. In fact, these words ended up being woven through much of our conversation together.

The idea that we learn to see others, no matter who they are, as 'privileged sources of God's presence and salvation' is at the core of Gospel teaching. And as Catholic educators, it should be at the core of our teaching and the way our schools are constituted. Ideally, it is an idea that should be the very starting point for any discussion about social responsibility.

I must admit that, as I began preparing to write this article, I did find myself heading over to ChatGPT to see what I could learn about the concept of social responsibility. As expected, the rather generous response, although rendered very quickly, did not turn out to be at all inspiring. There were statements about different dimensions that could be associated with social responsibility: environmental care, ethical business practices, philanthropy and stakeholder engagement. They stimulated my mind, but nowhere was there anything that touched my heart the way that Fr. Lennon's poignant question did.

And I think that's the point. Social responsibility is not about big ideas or grand theories, as important as those

You Can't Take That Back!

By Megan McGarry and Laurie McCann



This little thing called Social Media, it truly is the gift that keeps on giving. If anyone remembers the hair commercial for Vidal Sassoon “and they told two friends, and they told two friends and so on ...” Well, this basically sums how social media works.

Once you hit send, you can't take it back! Because it only takes a few seconds for someone to screengrab, download or share your post. If you remember nothing else from this article, remember delete does not exist!

Listen, there is a lot of good in using social media for business or pleasure. But the reality of it is that there is a lot of bad as well. The best way to understand social media and stay safe is to educate yourself on all the settings, understand what phishing is, know how to report any suspicious behaviour through the app and of course contacting the police if anything online is of a criminal nature.

Social media has truly evolved over the years. There is an app for everything. So what does that mean for us? Well, the more apps there are, the more chance you have of having a larger than life digital Footprint (we will talk about this in a minute) and to become a victim of phishing, criminal harassment or fraud.

What is a “digital footprint?” It is the trail of data you leave when using the internet, it includes websites, emails, information you submit online and the apps you use (if your account is public).

So as adults, our prefrontal cortex, also known as your reasoning chip, is fully developed. So we tend to make better decisions than our youth. As the prefrontal cortex doesn't fully develop until we are 25, there is a high probability that our youth will make some bad decisions pertaining to social media.



Combatting Human Trafficking

By Monica Urquhart

In today's interconnected world, the alarming rise of human trafficking has become a grave concern that demands urgent attention. As Catholic school leaders, we bear a profound responsibility to impart knowledge and foster moral values and social awareness in our students.

As a high school administrator since 2015, I have dealt with some element of human trafficking at all my school placements. I have also had the misfortune of discovering and living through the effects of the grooming and luring of a close family member. This article explores the social responsibilities that administrators and schools have toward the fight against human trafficking, focusing on awareness, prevention and support.

A Beacon of Safety: Supporting Survivors

As a new vice-principal, I will never forget the day an officer came to talk to us about a new Grade 9 student moving to the area. We learned she was being relocated by Children's Aid to our school and an emergency foster situation to remove her away from her trafficker. We were shown pictures of the trafficker and told the student was at risk of returning to her trafficker and he could try to connect with her at school. We needed to support her presence in the school while ensuring

her safety. We developed a plan where she was met and brought to the office daily by support staff, and her attendance and whereabouts were monitored throughout the day.

This was my first experience with trafficking, and I did not feel equipped to offer this student support beyond what was available through guidance, chaplaincy and student success. If I had access to the information I now have through our board's policy, I would have had the knowledge and ability to connect our student to a team of supports that include both school and board mental health and Psychology Services. Catholic schools can serve as beacons of hope by offering a safe space for survivors to heal and rebuild their lives, in a supportive community where staff are trained to respond.

Becoming Aware: Unveiling the Shadows of Trafficking

At my second high school, two students revealed disturbing allegations of sex trafficking, drug use and recruitment potentially involving a peer. The allegations were shocking, and my colleagues did not hesitate to alert parents and involve law enforcement. This occurred before board disclosure protocols, so we relied heavily on our school resource officer and

Not All Superheroes Wear Capes

By Elo Igor

Spider-Man's famous quote "With great power comes great responsibility," applies not only to superheroes but also to school staff, who play a vital role in shaping student outcomes. In this article, members of School Mental Health Ontario's student reference group, ThriveSMH, share their perspectives through personal anecdotes by elaborating on three tips for principals and vice-principals.

1. Seek student perspectives to better understand their needs

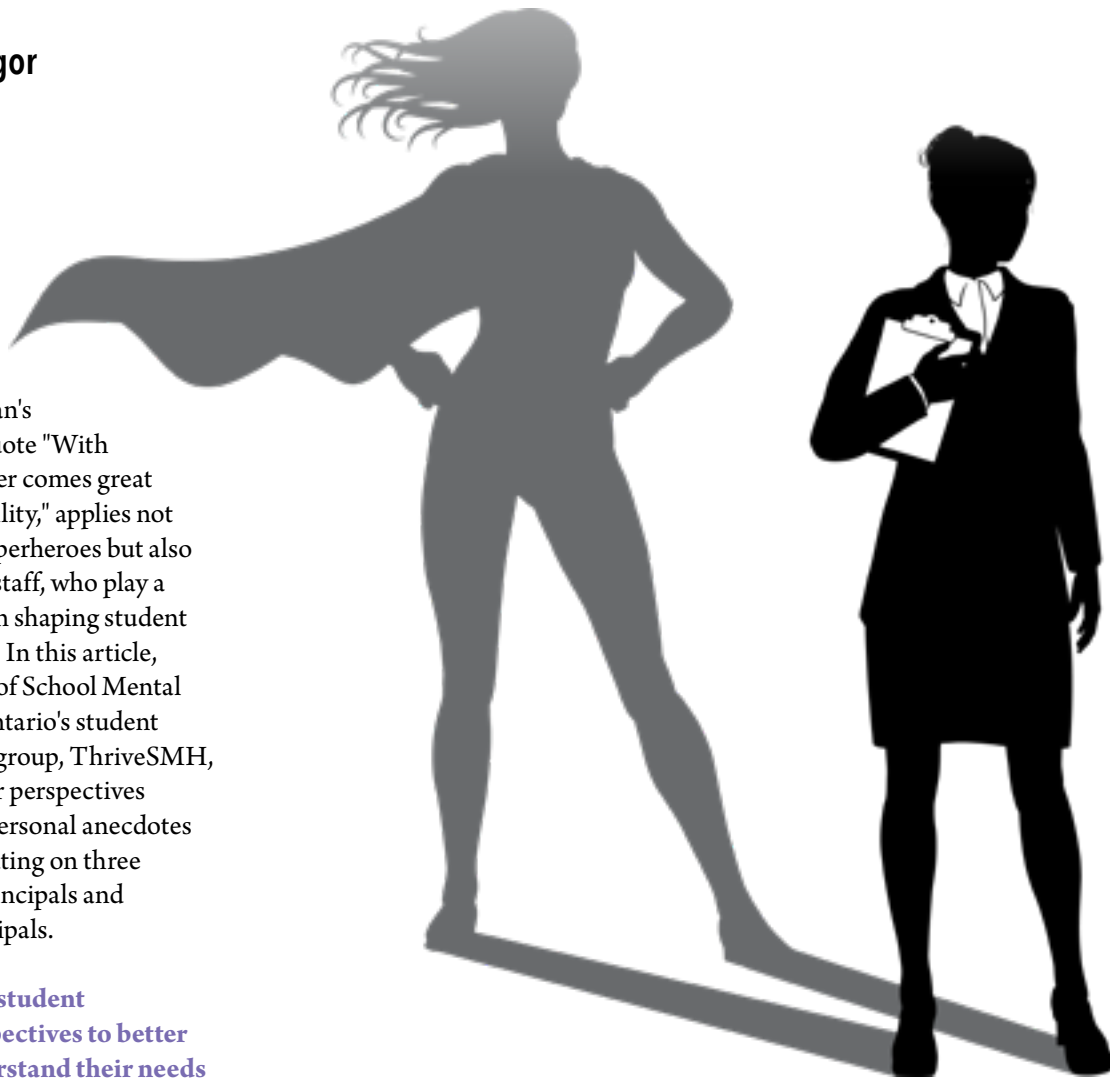
Varisha: My school wasn't always inclusive, and I struggled to fit in and feel like I belonged. However, in elementary school, my teacher, Mrs. T, sensed my struggle and took action. Her approach was both subtle and profound – she made time to speak with me about my experiences and share some of her own challenges with “fitting in.” She shared that those experiences had shaped her understanding of the importance of inclusivity and empathy. Her relatable stories comforted me, and I felt heard and cared for in school for the first time in a while.

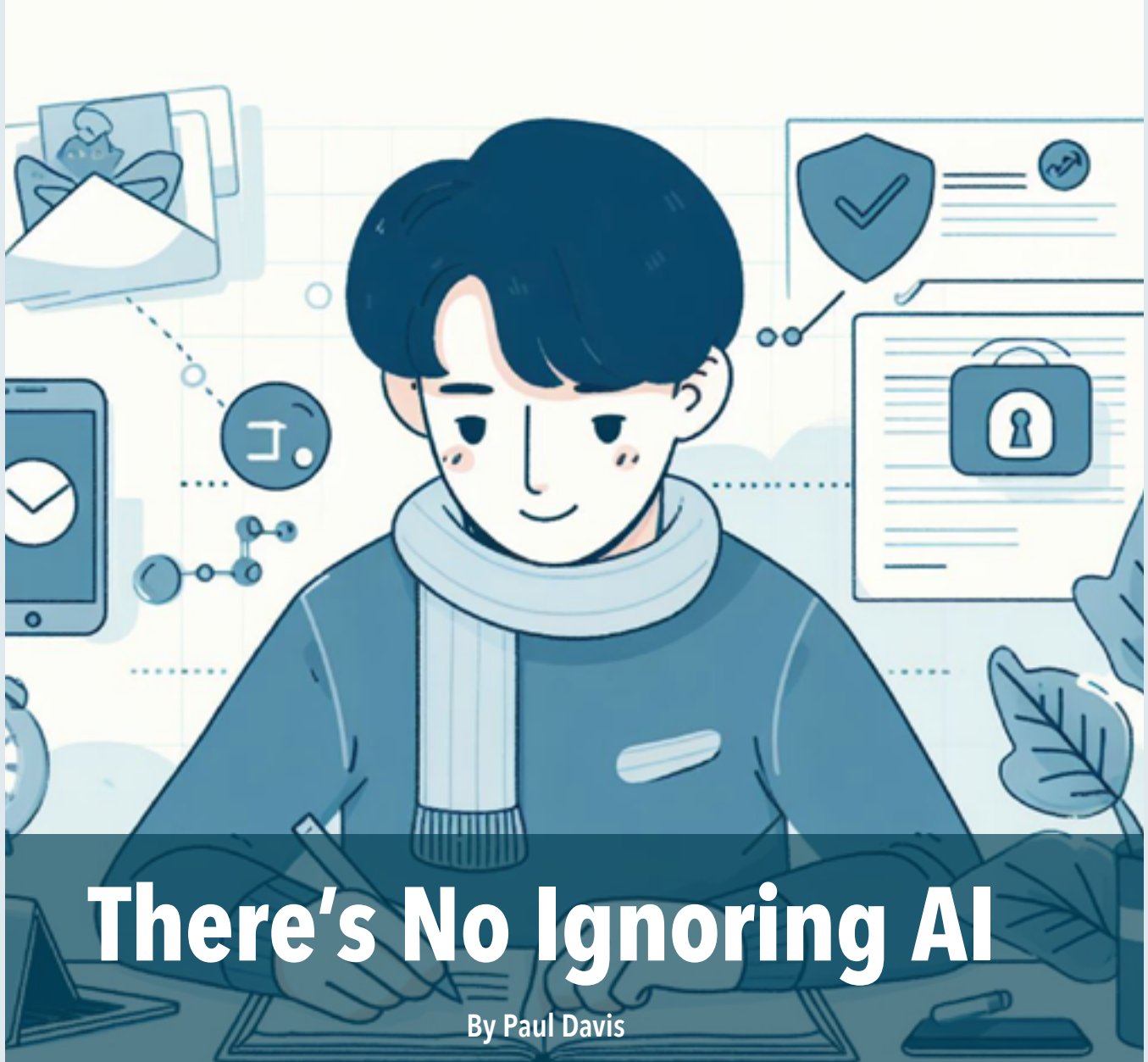
What struck me the most was Mrs. T's proactive approach. Rather than waiting for students to voice their concerns, she took the initiative to reach out and create a safe space for discussions. Mrs. T would champion changes in the school, organizing workshops on empathy, diversity and understanding. **It was clear to me that her actions**

were driven by a sincere desire to make the school environment better for everyone, which she learned through having meaningful conversations and checking in with her students.

Kirin: Cultural clothing is an important way for people to express their heritage and identity. All students should have this opportunity and at my high school, I experienced a cultural showcase (I hope the first of many) and was able to wear my cultural clothing, but many students missed out.

A decision was made that only students involved in the event were allowed to wear cultural attire, leaving others feeling left out. I suspect that this decision was due to fear





There's No Ignoring AI

By Paul Davis

When I was first asked to write an article on Artificial Intelligence, my tech humour said, "I'll get ChatGPT to write it." In fact, upon completing my article, I did ask Bard, Claude & ChatGPT to share their findings. The results? Much different from what you will read here. You'll find the answer as to why in the last line of this piece.

There are many ways to approach AI and its use in education and how students can use it. When ChatGPT first rattled the foundation of the internet just over a year ago, it was like playing a game of catch up as students were using it to cheat in high school/college on assignments. Some succeeded but many failed. They failed because of that amazing human being that stands before our students in class (a teacher). That teacher knows a student better than AI does. Teachers knew that what was submitted was not from the mind of the student they got to know in class.

To confirm suspicions, some educators would use ChatGPT detectors (90 per cent+ accurate) to determine if it was created by AI. Then, the students caught on that there were AI detectors. Instagrammers created videos showing kids how to get around the detectors! They were shown that some AI code was able to humanize the output of ChatGPT so the detectors would not work effectively.

Yet again, teachers knew it was not the work/words/character of the student. Kids still try to find ways, but I'm finding it less of an issue because most educators set out firm expectations along with consequences of cheating not only in high school, but in universities as well.

Over the past year, I've asked over 100 teachers (Grade 7+) in four provinces, what their thoughts are on GPT.



Creating Safer Spaces for Learning

By Dr. Andrew B. Campbell

Who is he? He gets up to get ready for school – but is fearful to go today. School can be a dangerous place for a boy who is so different, and he knows that too well. He knows today, like many other days, he wishes he did not have to face the other boys who watch his every move. Who is he? He struggles and is in pain each time he remembers school and what he missed trying to hide from the boys. He is living in the land of opportunity, but he is not prepared. He was never prepared. School was a fearful place and those days hiding from the boys and missing school had impacted on his destiny. He blames school. Who is he? He knows he has to put on the same uniform as the other boys, but he knows deep down he is not like the other boys. He is different – not the special kind of admired different – just different. A different that is hated. The kind of difference that has become a burden. The kind of difference he wishes he could give back. Who is he? He is that boy who is excluded from so many activities. He made that choice. It is better for him to stay away and stay out of trouble. He is obvious, he is noticed. Everything about him has become the

*target of ridicule. He knows his place and he keeps in his place. School is a dangerous place for a boy like him, and he knows it. Who is he? He is that boy that wants to see the educational leaders do something about the situation. He wants to be able to report bullying and harassment to his principal and teachers and know that it will be taken care of. (Excerpt from *The Invisible Student in the Jamaican Classroom*)*

In my book *The Invisible Student in the Jamaican Classroom* (2018), there is a feature where I encourage stakeholders: classroom teachers, educational leaders, guidance counsellors, parents and students to pause and reflect. This is an opportunity to sit with the conversation, sit with the questions, sit with the tensions and uncertainty, sit with the information and awareness, sit with their own learning and the unlearning, sit with the things that are uncomfortable, sit with the things that are new and strange, and in this moment.



Lift Every Voice

By Cassandra Jack-Caldeira

The experiences of those in leadership matter. We lead as we are. We have a heightened awareness of the changing student landscape in our schools. Our Multi-Year Strategic Plans, Board Equity and Inclusion Plans, as well as our call as a community of faith continue to be guideposts in supporting students in our increasingly culturally diverse schools.

Leadership roles within our school systems are varied and challenging. Students in our Catholic schools are experiencing new, complex challenges in a changing world. Together, we have a social responsibility to help schools and school boards reshape the way we lead.

Being committed to intentional actions toward removing barriers and making education more accessible for all includes acknowledging and addressing the experiences of those in leadership, especially those leaders who are racialized. Fostering conditions for authentic measures of diversity, equity and inclusion, means making space for diversity of voices and authentic opportunities to share experiences. By deepening our understanding of the experiences of our racialized leaders, our Catholic schools become spaces in which, guided by our faith, are more responsive to emerging student needs. A workplace

Mental Health: Where Does Social Responsibility Reside?

By Dr. Andrew Miki and Joseph Geiser



The recent tragic suicide of a Toronto principal has been a harsh reminder to all of us of the trauma that can come from accusations, stress and uncertainty. Dr. Andrew Miki and Joseph Geiser have collaborated in the writing of this reflection and urge anyone experiencing mental health needs, crisis or emotional distress to reach out for help and support.

There is a famous experiment from the 1960s where Dr. Martin Seligman put a dog in a large experimental box with a divider in the middle. In the initial phase, a bell would ring, and the dog would learn very quickly that if it jumped over the divider to the other side of the box, it would avoid an electric shock. However, in the experimental condition, Seligman changed the rules so that the dog received a shock regardless of anything it did. Eventually, he observed that the dog displayed many behaviours consistent with depression, which included curling up in the corner and passively accepting the shocks. Seligman called this “Learned Helplessness” because the dog learned that it lost any autonomy to control its outcome. Many years later, Dr. Seligman outlined how people develop depression in a similar manner when they learn that no matter what they do, nothing seems to help get themselves back on track.

In our work at Starling, I have observed an increasing trend in Ontario’s education sector where principals’ and vice-principals’ autonomy to control the outcome of their actions is diminishing. Increasing pressure from

important stakeholders are eroding administrators’ positions and their ability to effectively do their jobs.

The pandemic has negatively shaped students so their behaviours are also increasingly disruptive and problematic. Their parents are more stressed and more frequently looking to schools to solve their children’s issues. Advocacy groups cast a blanket of fear and administrators have witnessed how one false move can lead to a negative public backlash that forces colleagues to take a leave of absence. School boards are also increasing their expectations, which are not consistently clear or appropriately supported. There also appears to be a major focus by governments, specifically the Ministry of Education, centred around budgets, to keeping the education machine running in a fiscally responsible way. However, the system itself is not necessarily aligned with current issues.

All these challenges place our school administrators in the middle of a perfect storm where they are experiencing “Learned Helplessness.”

The Toronto School Administrators’ Association released some alarming statistics in March, 2023, about their members:

- >70% claim their level of stress is unmanageable
- 74% report they are experiencing challenges managing student behaviour
- 61% admit they can no longer lead their schools effectively



Restoring Psychological Safety in Schools

By Roxanne Derhodge

In the wake of the pandemic, many individuals continue to grapple with the lasting effects of persistent stress. We all vividly recall the moment when it became clear that our world had been upended, leaving us feeling utterly powerless over our lives. Unfortunately, even now, numerous symptoms of post-traumatic stress, including anxiety, depression and hypervigilance, linger within many individuals.

As a psychologist, it is widely understood that for humans to regain their optimal functionality, they need to experience a sense of safety and security once more – a state that often eluded us in the tumultuous year of 2020. This leads us to ponder: how is this situation affecting the culture within schools and the capacity for students to engage in effective learning once again? It is of utmost importance for school leaders to play a pivotal role in reestablishing psychological safety, allowing students' minds to function positively, thereby enhancing the learning process.

In recent decades, our understanding of the profound impact of distress on our ability to function has expanded significantly. When working with individuals who have endured substantial stress, it becomes evident how the body and brain react when they perceive a threat. Stress triggers a response that shuts down the logical regions of the brain, plunging the individual into a state of fight, flight or freeze. Therefore, within educational institutions, all those adults supporting students need to grasp the fundamentals of neuroscience, stress triggers and the concept of psychological safety.

As a school leader, it is your responsibility to create an environment of psychological safety. Equipping everyone involved in the learning process with essential knowledge about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), neuroscience and effective engagement in their roles is imperative. Here are some key questions for educators to reflect upon:

Examining the New Literacy Curriculum

By Teresa Paoli

In June, the Ontario Ministry of Education released the updated Language curriculum for Grades 1 to 8, along with the curriculum for Grade 9 De-Streamed English. This revision was eagerly anticipated as the curriculum was last updated in 2006. Since 2006, additional complementary ministry documents and resources have informed classroom practice and pedagogy in literacy. These have included resources dedicated to Indigenous Education, culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, inquiry, student voice and equity. The new 2023 curriculum embeds these important principles, but is also enhanced by specifically and intentionally addressing the recommendations made by the Ontario Human Rights Commission Right to Read (2022) report.

The OHRC (2022) Right to Read report “highlights the personal and societal consequences of reading difficulties in Ontario schools.” (Cummins, 2022) The report notes that “students with word-reading difficulties/dyslexia and other disabilities, students from lower-income backgrounds, racialized students and Indigenous students are all much more likely to fall behind their peers when it comes to early reading. This makes learning to read a human rights issue...” (OHRC, 2022)

The Right to Read report makes valuable recommendations for how literacy practices must evolve to improve outcomes for underserved students, while highlighting that literacy is a social responsibility and a social justice issue that requires both an updated curriculum and financial resources. It also details how children who experience dyslexia have not been well served in Ontario schools. Right to Read notes that Ontario has not been fulfilling its Supreme Court of Canada obligation/finding that states: learning to read is a basic and essential human right that legally requires Ontario schools to ensure that all students acquire functional reading skills.

The new Language curriculum is informed by the OHRC report and is “grounded in the belief that all students can succeed when they develop knowledge and skills in language and literacy. Strong foundational knowledge and skills in both oral and written language are necessary to support more complex skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.” In addition, the curriculum explicitly states and honours the work done in the last decade related to inclusion, equity, culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, Indigenous Education, differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning and a tiered approach to intervention.

Throughout the new curriculum document, Catholic leaders will see clear connections to the visions and goals set out in the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations, particularly in the expectations for effective communicators. An effective communicator who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in light of Gospel values.

1. Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of Gospel values
2. Reads, understands and uses written materials effectively
3. Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others
4. Writes and speaks fluently in one of both of Canada’s official languages
5. Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life

The focus on Universal Design for Learning, differentiated Instruction and the tiered approach to language and literacy instruction honours the “varied identities, lived experiences, linguistic resources, personal interests and learning profiles and readiness of our students.” These are important elements included in the preface; as well as the vision and goals of both the Grade 1 to 8 Language curriculum and the Grade 9 De-Streamed curriculum.

The tiered approach to instruction ensures “responsive, timely and effective instruction” that improves student outcomes. Importantly, ministry guidance in Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013 specifically related to reading instruction and assessment has been superseded by the Language curriculum (2023).

In our professional learning networks with colleagues and in our school based professional learning communities, school leaders may want to explore the way in which UdL and DI and the tiered approach to learning are

Food for Thought:

- How does the curriculum define UdL, DI and the tiered approach to instruction? What do we already know and do that supports these practices?
- How do we differentiate instruction so that it is student-centred and involves a “strategic blend of whole-class, small-group and individual learning activities to suit students’ differing strengths, interests and levels of readiness to learn?”
- How will I ensure that the principles of UdL, DI and the tiered approach to instruction are robust rather than superficially addressed in my school community?
- What professional learning and resources are needed to support this work? Who can support us in this work?



Be the Spark!

By Alan Doyle



I walked the length of Water Street, the oldest street in North America, every day for a month or so in the early 2000s as Great Big Sea was making a record. I lived on one side of downtown St. John's and our studio was on the other side, so I enjoyed the 20-minute stroll to clear my head each morning. Each day, I passed a gent on the street, who was looking for money. I gave him a dollar and we chatted about his mental health and addiction issues and how he ended up where he was. Over few weeks, I came to look forward to our chats. It was a peaceful break in the day and I happily gave him a dollar a day to help him out.

When the record was finished, GBS hit the road and I wondered how I could give him a dollar a day without being there to hand it to him myself. So, I saved a dollar a day in my knapsack. I did that for a whole year and at the end of the year I gave \$365 to a mental health and addictions facility in St. John's. I repeated this a few years in a row.

Over time, I realized my dollars could add up to make a difference. Then, on Tibb's Eve (December 23rd for those non-Newfoundlanders out there), some friends and I got to thinking – what if we all got together and gave a dollar a day? How much could we help people with mental health and addiction issues if we all gave a dollar a day? And with that simple but powerful idea, A Dollar A Day was born.

Since our launch in 2018, A Dollar A Day has built a community of Dollar-A-Dayers who each pitch in one dollar a day towards mental health and addiction support. By banding together alongside some generous corporate donors, we've granted over \$4 million to 91 frontline mental health and addiction service providers in every province and territory in Canada. What started with me giving a dollar to that gent on the street has now touched the lives of thousands of folks across the country.

While getting much-needed funds to frontline mental health and addiction service providers is our central mission, we also exist to create a shared sense of purpose and community around giving. One dollar a day on its

own, or one-person's decision to do one small act, may not seem like much, but when combined with thousands of others, its impact is immense.

You know within your circles and the students you serve that the will to tackle mental health issues is strong. We can all make a difference, one dollar or one action at a time. Each of us has the power to make the world a better place, and in doing so, we encourage others to do the same. As school administrators, you are uniquely positioned to be role models and affect change.

Something as simple as a dollar a day, or one small show of kindness or support, from you, your students or your school community can be the start. And can make all the difference. [CP](#)

For Your Reflection:

- How can you meaningfully increase your "presence" to those who are tackling mental health issues in your school community?
- As a school leader, how can you promote social responsibility and student engagement and connect the accumulative good that one small daily action can make to a school community?
- When Alan Doyle first stopped to give the gent a dollar, he had no idea his simple act would spark a movement. Are there small make-a-difference initiatives that can become part of your school story?



Alan Doyle is a Canadian musician, songwriter, producer, author, actor, best known as the lead singer of Great Big Sea and for his recent role in the musical comedy *Tell Tale Harbour*. He was named a member of the Order of Canada. He is a co-founder of A Dollar A Day Foundation. www.adollaraday.ca

Building a Sustainable Advantage Through Education

By Michael Salvatori



As a language teacher and learner, I have always found proverbs to be rich tools for reflection and valuable springboards for discussion.

The French proverb, *Nul ne sait ce que l'avenir nous réserve* (no one knows what the future holds), continues to ring true and to aptly describe the relative unpredictability of the future.

Following 20 years working in professional regulation, including 10 years as Registrar and CEO of the Ontario College of Teachers, I am embarking on a new venture – Director of Continuing Education at the University of St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. Returning to

St. Michael's where I studied as an undergraduate student represents for me an intentional step toward the future.

As I undertake this new role and the opportunity to expand the Continuing Education Division, I reflect about our future as a global community and the power of education to shape that future.

Is the future, in fact, so uncertain?

I believe that a degree of certainty of the future resides in our capacity to positively influence it through socially responsible, ethical and thoughtful decisions and actions in the present, which take into consideration the environment and our well-being.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:6-7



During this sacred season, may the miracle of Christ's birth bring you hope, happiness and harmony. Let us remember the true meaning of Christmas and spread love and kindness to all. Wishing you and your loved ones a peace-filled holiday with joy, laughter and cherished moments together.



Christmas Office Hours:

◆ The office will be closed from Dec. 25, 2023 to Jan. 5, 2024. Voice and email messages will be responded to on Jan. 8, 2024.

◆ If this is an emergency, please contact Joseph Geiser, Executive Director, at jgeiser@cpco.on.ca

◆ If assistance is required for CPCO's Long Term Disability Program, contact Johnson Inc. via email at: cpco@johnson.ca

New Professional Advisory Clears Path for Equity and Equality

By Debbie L. Kasman

We've known for a long time that effective school leaders are key to large-scale education reform, and to accomplish lasting reform, it takes leaders who can create a fundamental transformation in the learning culture of schools and the teaching profession itself.

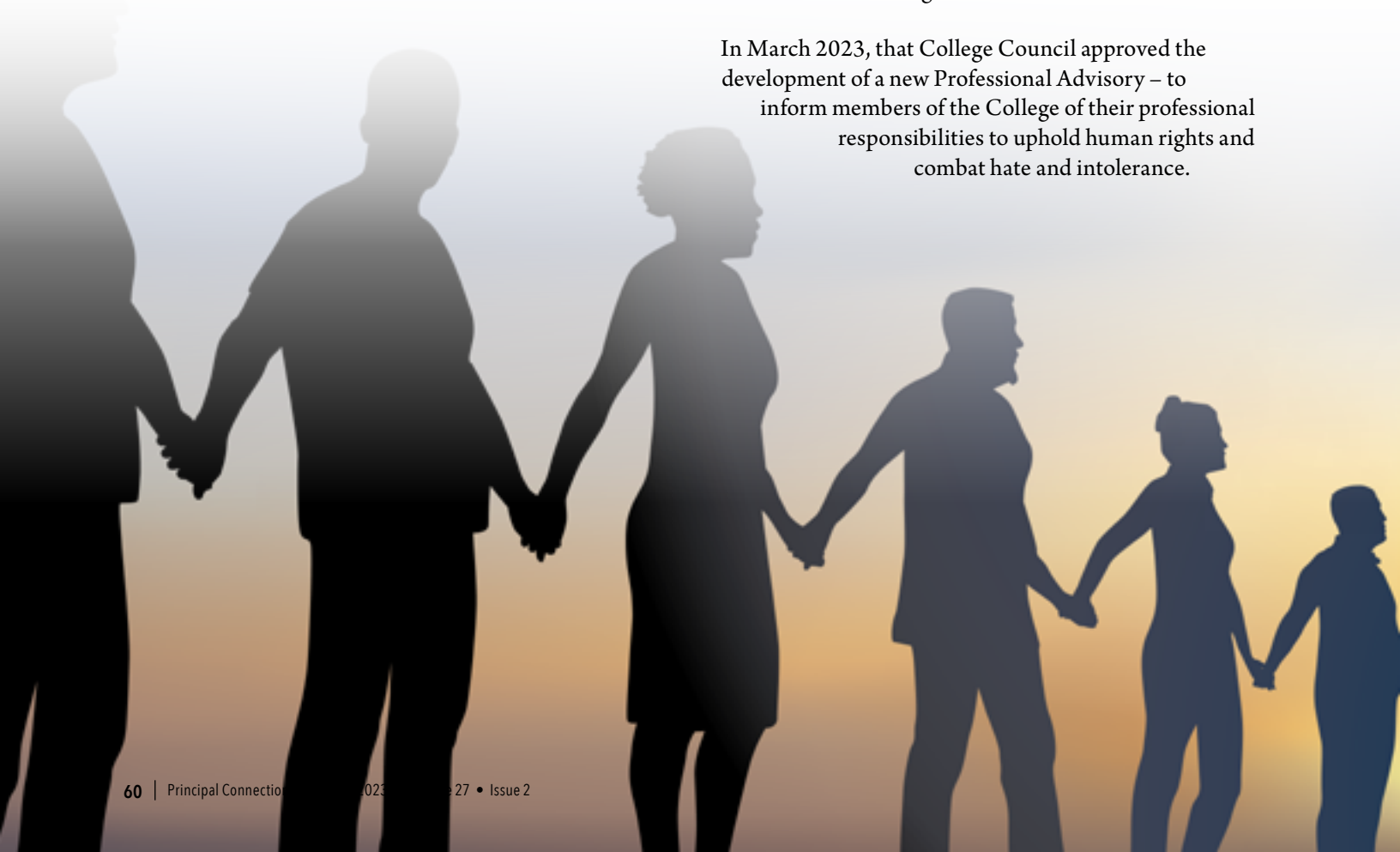
Yet the Ontario College of Teachers' Professional Advisories didn't always align with this legal, ethical and moral calling – because the College consistently told its members to avoid saying anything or putting anything in writing that might reflect poorly on an educator's school or the teaching profession itself.

This messaging created a conundrum for many educators in light of human rights legislation.

How do you create a fundamental transformation in the learning culture of your school and the teaching profession itself – as it relates to human rights, hate and intolerance – if you can't say anything or put anything in writing that may reflect poorly on your school or the teaching profession itself?

The College governs the education profession in Ontario and also has a duty to protect the public interest through licencing, accreditation and discipline. The College's Standards of Practice and Education Committee advises College Council on the development, implementation and review of the ethical and practice standards and the Professional Learning Framework.

In March 2023, that College Council approved the development of a new Professional Advisory – to inform members of the College of their professional responsibilities to uphold human rights and combat hate and intolerance.



Building Community

By Pat Murphy

As we evolve out of pandemic mode and begin to live life 'normally,' one might hope we have learned some valuable lessons; that our 'new normal' might be a better, kinder place for everyone. I'd like to share how our community is working towards making a difference for those who are unhoused. And how our board, schools and students are stepping up to be part of a 'right now' solution.

Some Background

Homelessness is ever-increasing in most of our communities and there is little optimism it will be resolved soon. Politicians and builders talk a good game and there are some who genuinely want to change the landscape for those who are homeless.

However, big wheels turn slowly, and some plans fall short of their goals. Planned solutions do very little for those who are currently living rough on the streets.

In 2020, Jeff Wilmer, a former city planner, with Ron Doyle, owner of Waterloo event centre Lot 42, approached Nadine Green, who had been evicted from her convenience store for housing homeless people at night. They invited her to bring her unhoused friends to Lot 42 and pitch their tents in a new, safe place.

This was the beginning of A Better Tent City (ABTC).

The original group of 15 people included some of the hardest to serve people living rough in our city, those for whom alternative housing options just didn't work. This first step towards dignity provided shelter from the elements in a heated and air-conditioned space, a large common space to socialize and eat, washrooms and a converted mobile home for showers and laundry. The local Food Bank and The Social Development Centre Waterloo Region were also on board.

Word of this bold move spread quickly. As with all good ideas, those with vision and kind hearts joined in support. Funding allowed for an order of 12 tiny homes, 8'X10' wooden garden sheds, which would provide new homes for those currently living in tents. While I joined to help insulate and vapour barrier the sheds for winter, many others were hard at work feeding the residents and caring for their emotional and physical needs.

Excitedly, the Lot 42 residents began to occupy the tiny home sheds and a community began to evolve and grow. A local family foundation generously offered to buy 10 additional sheds. We acquired the services of an on-site Methadone program to assist residents in dealing with

addiction issues. A heated and air conditioned 20' x 10' office sea container was delivered courtesy of Waterloo Catholic District School Board. This kind act met the need for privacy for the methadone program and provides many functions pivotal to ABTC's ongoing success.

Students Engage with ABTC and Our Residents

While all this was happening, Father Toby Collins connected in what would prove to be a long-term, thriving relationship with the project. To start, he bought three additional sheds and perched them proudly on the steps of St. Mary's Catholic Church. Father Toby also had an idea to engage students in a really meaningful learning experience. He invited secondary students to volunteer time to help in the painting, and installation of insulation, vapour barriers, walls, ceilings and flooring of the three tiny homes.

The pride the students took in the process was heartwarming. It was also a steppingstone to the next level of student engagement. Father Toby approached



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