



PrincipalConnections

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TRUST

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Dialogue and Trust

KENNETH LEITHWOOD

A Question for School Leaders

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Making It Work

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CPCOofficial





FROM THE PRESIDENT & THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Annalisa Varano & Joseph Geiser

A Year Like No Other

Throughout this past year, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that our Catholic voices, our challenges, our aspirations, and our successes are heard by everyone in Ontario's education landscape. We have strengthened our relationships, and continue to work diligently with our Catholic partners while reflecting the mission, vision and priorities of CPCO. We have ensured that our internal practices are consistent with our publicly-stated Letters Patent to use the talents, strengths and experiences of those who work for you on a daily basis.

It is fitting and timely that this issue illuminates the importance of trust. This school year has been unlike any other, bringing labour disruption, work-to-rule campaigns, rotating strikes, and now, the once-unimaginable reality of a pandemic forcing our schools to close. COVID-19 has threatened not only our health and social freedom, but also the very learning of the students that we serve and care for. Now, more than ever, we seek support, reassurance and direction from our governments and health officials, and we recognize that we must set aside differences and rebuild compromised trust relationships to effect good decision making. Our survival depends upon overcoming the challenges together, not squabbling as foes over words in a contract.

In this uncertain time of social and physical distancing, we must remind ourselves that we are called to be the voice of reason, sincerity, authenticity and consistency. We must remain empathetic, compassionate and patient even in the most challenging moments. Pope Francis speaks of the boundless trust in God who never abandons us: *"We may be certain that the Lord is with us, and therefore we must be persevering on our*

journey, thanks to hope which instils fortitude. The pastors' word will become reassuring to the faithful: the Lord will never abandon us."

As Catholic school leaders, it has always been our responsibility to help our staff and students avoid falling

victim to disappointment and discouragement in the face of setback. We must continue to remind all who suffer and struggle with mental and physical health challenges to have faith that the Lord stands besides us, to trust in His plan and believe that this too shall pass.

Thank you for your commitment to your school

communities and the health and wellness of all.

As we close the 2019/2020 school year in the most unprecedented way, we recognize the tremendous energy and leadership of those who have brought us to this moment in our history. We eagerly look forward to the opportunities to grow and strengthen CPCO and the voices of those we represent. Our mission continues to be one of providing the strongest voice and the most effective support from all departments in order to meet your needs.

For our Associates who are retiring, we congratulate and thank you for your service and dedication to Catholic education and wish you much happiness, good health and many new adventures. For those who are returning for the new school year, may this summer be a safe and healthy one filled with relaxation, refreshment and rejuvenation with family and friends, whether face to face or virtually.

God bless.

We must set aside differences and rebuild compromised trust relationships to effect good decision making.



The Bridge to Tomorrow

Trust is at the heart of every relationship. It has been recognized as the bond that keeps communities together, the base of reconciliation, the mortar that builds bridges, the fuel that propels change, the confidence in people that ignites innovation and the driving force that moves things from 'good' to 'great.'

Consistency of action, consistency of word and consistency of how someone is made to feel over time is the true measure of trust. Trust is often the first thing to be broken when conflict arises. Rebuilding trust requires a largeness of heart and is often the most difficult work. Your own self awareness and vulnerability, your confidence in others capabilities, their potential and their insight, and your own capacity to truly be present and listen is essential. Trust is the personal leadership resource that drives school improvement and unites us with our purpose.

In times of uncertainty, when unanticipated challenges descend upon us, the role trust plays in doing and feeling 'what's right' is crucial.

Presently, trust is at the forefront of our professional lives both globally and locally. Steve Munby sets the context for us globally by commenting on our current reality. In his message *Leading during a Pandemic*, he invites school leaders to trust their instincts, be willing to ask for help and be optimistic. CPCO President Annalisa Varano, reflects on the complexity of our local situation in Ontario in her article *In Faith, We Trust*. She encourages Catholic Principals and Vice-Principals to be kind and gracious, and to continue with the work of reconciliation in order to restore trust. Both writers see trust as foundational to leadership.

Jim Knight ignites our thinking by exploring the conditions necessary for trust to flourish. He uses the work of Paolo

Freire to reflect on the importance "dialogue" plays in building trusting relationships. Dialogue requires love, humility and faith. If we are open to others and believe in their goodness, trust is the natural outcome. Trust is established by dialogue.

Ken Leithwood deepens our understanding by sharing the findings of five recent research studies on trust. In his article, *A Question for School Leaders*, Ken reminds us that we should always focus on what is best needed for our schools and be good at doing it. Trust will grow from there.

In *Making it Work*, Jenni Donohoo and Steven Katz

highlight the importance of building trust by learning together. When school leaders overtly model vulnerability by learning with their staff, they level the playing field and open the doors for trust to flow. By modelling curiosity, asking questions, exploring the grey areas and learning together, principals and vice-principals become vulnerable, demonstrate a willingness to learn and bring their own personal authenticity to the table.

Principals Melissa Daddabbo and Tensy Kalaparambath conducted their own grassroots study in an effort to describe what trust looks like, sounds like and feels like in a school. In their article, *It Takes Time, But in the Meantime*, they explore effective practices that build trust and provide an on-the-ground measure of what psychological safety looks like in schools.

"Trust" is the connector of this year's three publications of *Principal Connections*. It is the key to creating ethical, caring learning environments in our schools. When trust matters, reliability of words and actions are valued, authentic collaboration develops and a sense of belonging emerges for all to embrace.

"Leadership is an achievement of trust."

Peter Drucker



Leading during a Pandemic

By Steve Munby

“My leadership development program never prepared me for this.”

Twitter quote from a school leader

As a leader, I have had to handle many challenges in my career, including dealing with gangsters, the aftermath of the murder of children and the death of members of staff. But I cannot think of anything in my whole career that even comes close to requiring the amount of bravery and dedication that I am seeing now from teachers, from school leaders and from others in public service all over the country in these unprecedented times.

No development program can possibly prepare leaders to help them to deal with the current issues and challenges they face. We are in uncharted territory. Evidence-based strategies that can tell you which actions are likely to be more effective just don't apply. The impact of the COVID-19 virus means that leaders in education and in other essential services are being required to make decisions that could save or endanger hundreds of lives – often with very little guidance to help them.

In **FAITH** *We Trust*



By Annalisa Varano

Because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:3-4

This school year has brought many challenges – some anticipated and some that we could never have imagined.

We began the year knowing that labour contracts had expired, that as-yet unknown changes could affect Ontario's education system, and that labour negotiations would be tumultuous at best. Group after group moved through seemingly endless days and months of bargaining, initiated increasingly complex sanctions including rotating strikes, and placed increasing pressures on school and system leaders. Staff, students, families and stakeholders all stood by hoping for a resolution while school leaders sought to minimize disruption to safety and learning. In a balancing act worthy of any high-wire acrobat, Catholic school leaders have been on the front lines, diligently trying to manage the range of expectations raised by labour action, keep up with the

responsibilities of school leadership, and respect the principles of fair and transparent bargaining.

Any time turbulence leads to a climate of distrust, school and system leaders must focus on rebuilding relationships and fostering reconciliation so that forgiveness can take place and trust can be restored. During these recent labour disruptions, school leaders have had to work harder than ever to maintain good relationships with teachers and support staff. It was, again, difficult and tricky, but it was necessary to ensure that their mutual trust was not diminished. When they heard the joyous news that the parties had reached a tentative deal, everyone – school leaders, families and students – breathed a sigh of relief. The disruption and uncertainty would end and school life would return to normal. The good relationships and the extra efforts made to maintain them would pay off.

DIALOGUE AND TRUST

By Jim Knight

When I was an undergraduate student at Wilfrid Laurier University, I stumbled into a philosophy of education course taught by Dr. Robert Litke, which ultimately changed my life. I left the course very interested in education and deeply affected by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire's book challenged me then, and it still does today. I find the book to be wise, provocative and humanizing, and, among many other things, it offers a concise summary of some of the necessary conditions for dialogue, and ultimately trust to flourish. Dialogue, Freire says, requires love, humility and faith.

LOVE

"Love," Freire writes, "is ... an act of courage, not of fear... [a] commitment to other people" (p.78). Dialogue, Freire writes, "cannot exist ... in the absence of a profound love for the world and for [people] (p.77)." This sounds wonderful, but what does Freire mean by the word love?

Margaret Atwood has famously written, "The Eskimos have 52 words for snow because it is so special to them; there ought to be as many for love." Apparently Atwood may be wrong about the number of words for snow in the Inuktitut, but she is right that we need many different definitions for love. Few words in English have been more trivialized that

"If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love [people] – I cannot enter into dialogue."

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, page 78



A QUESTION FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

By Kenneth Leithwood

Depending on your analogical preferences, trust among organizational members and other stakeholders is often considered to be the grease that keeps the wheels moving in the organizational machine, or the nourishment in the organizational soil out of which springs collaborative work and innovative ideas.

The question is what should school leaders do about trust in their schools?

This article refines that broad claim using selected results of five studies conducted by my colleagues and me over the past half dozen years. There is a longstanding and well-developed body of evidence about trust in schools on which these studies build. I have little to say explicitly about this wider body of evidence, nor do I offer a definition of trust to begin; whatever you think trust is will do.

Using evidence from the five studies, I argue that:

- Trust does have a significant effect on a school's quality and its contributions to students. But trust is one of a large handful of school conditions¹ significantly influencing the success of students, and trust is not likely the most consequential of those conditions. Justification for this claim is provided by *Study One*.





Making It Work

By Steven Katz and
Jenni Donohoo



LESSONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

By Andreas Schleicher

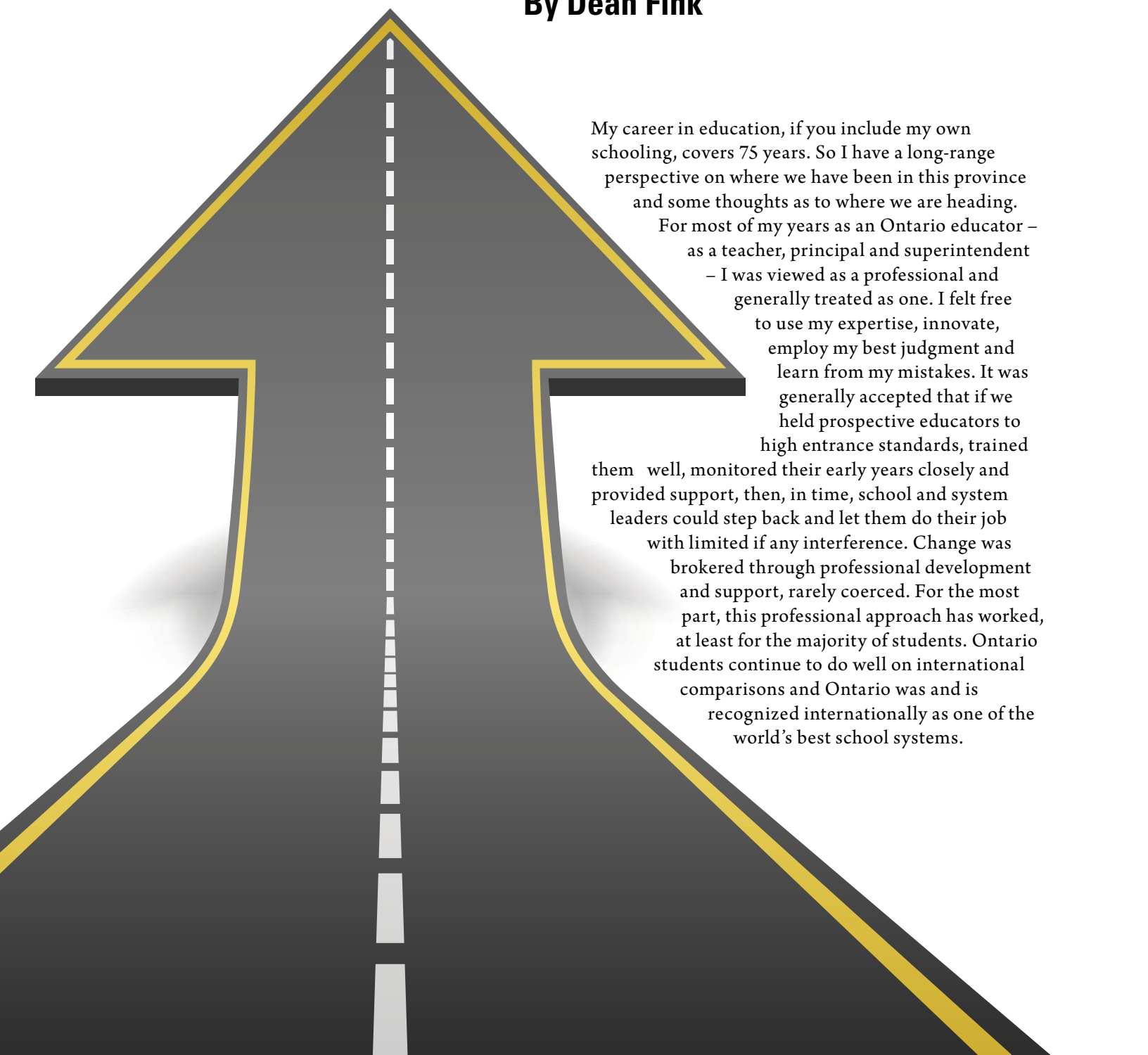
Changing schools can be like moving graveyards: it is often hard to rely on the people out there to help, because the status quo has so many protectors. Meanwhile, the changes in our societies have vastly outpaced the structural capacity of our school systems to respond.

Even the best education minister can no longer do justice to the needs of millions of students, hundreds of thousands of teachers and tens of thousands of schools. The challenge is to build on the expertise of teachers

and school leaders and enlist them in the design of superior policies and practices. This is not accomplished just by letting a thousand flowers bloom; it requires a carefully crafted enabling environment that can unleash teachers' and schools' ingenuity and build capacity for change. It requires leaders who tackle institutional structures that too often are built around the interests and habits of adults rather than learners; leaders who are sincere about social change, imaginative in policy making and capable of using the trust they earn to deliver effective change.

Leading with **INTEGRITY**

By Dean Fink



My career in education, if you include my own schooling, covers 75 years. So I have a long-range perspective on where we have been in this province and some thoughts as to where we are heading.

For most of my years as an Ontario educator – as a teacher, principal and superintendent – I was viewed as a professional and generally treated as one. I felt free to use my expertise, innovate, employ my best judgment and learn from my mistakes. It was generally accepted that if we held prospective educators to high entrance standards, trained them well, monitored their early years closely and provided support, then, in time, school and system leaders could step back and let them do their job with limited if any interference. Change was brokered through professional development and support, rarely coerced. For the most part, this professional approach has worked, at least for the majority of students. Ontario students continue to do well on international comparisons and Ontario was and is recognized internationally as one of the world's best school systems.

It Takes Time ... *But in the Meantime*

**By Melissa Daddabbo
and Tensy Kalaparambath**



We write from a unique perspective. We met when one of us was starting as a first-time teacher at a school from which the other was leaving. Our career paths intertwined throughout the years, and crossed again when we established a mentor/mentee relationship this past year. One of us was starting out as a new principal, the other was moving on to become principal of a new school community.

Embarking on similar ventures at different points of our careers, each needed to focus quickly on establishing relationships and demonstrate our trustworthy qualities to our respective staffs.

Fortunately, we have an established mutual respect and trust as mentor/mentee, and more importantly

as colleagues. Trust helps us to rely on each other for guidance, support and collegial understanding. We frequently commiserate and problem solve around school related issues.

When we speak of trust, we both understand its importance at the core of all we do in the school environment as we interact and develop relationships with staff, students, parents and the school community, including parish priests. We also know that trust takes time to develop.

So how do we set the stepping stones for trust development?

For us, it meant reaching out to our professional learning networks – people in education, directly impacted by trust, or lack thereof, in a school environment. What did they tell us?

The **H** **HONESTY** **E** **EMPATHY** **A** **ACCESSIBILITY** **T** **TRANSPARENCY** *Rule*

By John P. Shewchuk

Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.

Stephen R. Covey

At a time when trust in public institutions is at an all-time low around the world, Ontario's Catholic school boards face a unique set of challenges.

Not only must they deal with the always lurking existential threat posed by those advocating for one secular school system, but as bureaucracies in and of themselves, they manage the daily struggle of all large institutions; that is, to build and maintain the trust of stakeholders.

And when contentious issues arise in school communities – as they inevitably will – navigating those waters can be daunting for even the most seasoned administrator.

Which is why it is wise to begin building your “trust fund” right from Day 1 in your new school.

It's far easier to draw from an existing account of good will in dealing with tough issues than to have no cushion at all when things go awry. Prevention and mitigation are blue chip investments. Reaction is an often costly and avoidable expense.

So, as a school leader, how do you actually build and maintain that trust fund?

First, it's important to understand that trust is not a transactional thing.

Relationships in which trust is sought by telling stakeholders only what they want to hear – or doing only what they want you to do – will inevitably fail, probably quickly. But relationships in which trust is earned authentically and based on lived experience, have a level of durability that can last a long time.

Second, it is absolutely vital to understand that building trust within a school community is a team sport. And as with any winning team, success begins with a strong, confident, skilled coach.

The same leadership attributes you use to inspire trust and confidence in your team are the same attributes your team needs to inspire trust and confidence between your school and the community it serves.