

The CAP Journal

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP

Volume 14 No. 2, Spring 2006

Wellness Principal, Staff & Students



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Submissions on topics related to school administration and educational leadership are encouraged. Guidelines and editorial calendar are available at www.cdnprincipals.org/journal.htm

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Printing

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Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5
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The CAP Journal

The Canadian Resource for School-Based Leadership
Volume 14, No. 2, Spring 2006

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President's Message

It is always surprising to me how the end of a school year 'sneaks' up on me and particularly that as I get older, time

seems to pass more and more quickly. Such is the case now as I share some thoughts with you in the final message of my term as President of the Canadian Association of Principals.

To say that it has been a rewarding and a career learning experience would be an understatement, but at the same time it has been filled with the tremendous challenge of what principals and vice-principals across this country know all too well, the art of "juggling demands". Meeting the demands of school administration is taxing on a daily basis but combined with volunteer school and community commitments, is demanding on personal and family time as well. I am looking forward to June 30th and much needed rest and relaxation.

I still believe that I am not unlike many principals and vice-principals who, in their professional lives, would not have it any other way but demanding. There is that 'drive' and need to be involved and to make a difference. However, we must be aware of the changing educational environment and the warning signs that we have over-extended our involvement.

This issue of the CAP Journal is focused on wellness and it is increasingly clear that if we are to improve the health of schools then we must also focus on our personal wellness. Healthy schools will not exist without healthy and well school staff and this is underscored for school principals.

The impact of technology on our professional practice has been of epic proportions. Laptops, email and the internet have forever changed communication and the definition of 'workplace'. Technology has enhanced the productivity of principals and vice-principals but it has also made it more difficult to take personal time because

of the need to stay in touch with work and the drive for professional success. The level of balance between professional and personal life will always be the choice of the individual but the supports now exist to help in achieving balance that will bring professional success and a higher quality personal life. Check out the employee assistance programs available at your workplace. School districts and the professional organizations, of which we are members, are providing excellent support programs to help in achieving the goal of a balanced life.

As I reflect on the past year and the 'wellness' of the CAP organization I am excited and optimistic about the future. The CAP agenda for the past year has been ambitious but I am pleased to report that we have made considerable progress.

The CAP Strategic Action Plan focused the CAP agenda in the following areas:

- 1) to be the national organization/voice for principals and vice-principals;
- 2) to increase and improve our communications structures with affiliates and with individual members and
- 3) to increase CAP membership.

In working towards these objectives I can report that the Canadian Association of Principals:

- i) has been communicating its positions and policies to the Council of Education Ministers, Canada (CMEC) and the provincial and territorial education ministers;
- ii) continuing the partnership with the RCMP National Youth Strategy and Community Policing Branch in its efforts to create safe and healthy schools;
- (iii) the release of the *CAP Belief Statement on Aboriginal Education* which is based on the principle that **all** students are equally entitled to a

quality education;

iv) is partnered with Health Canada in creating the Be Drug Wise website, a site that targets 12-15 year-olds for drug awareness message;

v) the new partnership in PREVNet (Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network) to link NGOs and researchers together to provide empirically based education, assessment, intervention, and policy to address bullying problems in Canada;

vi) CAP has provided the impetus for the founding of the Atlantic Association of School Administrators (AASA) to foster equity of service and representation available to school administrators within Atlantic Canadian Teacher Associations;

vii) CAP is strengthening the partnerships with national sponsors *Premier*, *Jostens* and *McDonald's* and has seen the welcome addition of *Herff-Jones* as the new national sponsor of the CAP Distinguished Vice-Principal's Award;

viii) the introduction of the new and improved CAP Journal in a win-win partnership with *Premier*;

ix) the partnership between the The Learning Partnership and the CAP in support of the Canada's Outstanding Principals initiative has finished its second year and is experiencing strong growth;

x) the provision of quality professional development opportunities to principals such as the CAP National Conference and the relatively new CAP Atlantic Leadership Symposium; and

xi) the new communications initiatives being field-tested with the CAP Executive and Board of Directors in partnership with the CPCO affiliate.

The work of the CAP in the past year is a strong endorsement of the viability and growth of this organization. A 'healthy and well' CAP is evident in the common vision, the commitment and leadership of the Board through its affiliates, and in the adaptability of the organization to the ever-changing educational landscape. I encourage you to share the vision of the CAP and to be an active member of your local CAP affiliate. Visit

the new CAP website, www.cdnprincipals.org and share your comments on how CAP can improve service to its members.

It is late April at the writing of this message and I am looking forward to the CAP 2006 National Conference in Quebec City from May 11-13. I am sure to 'grow' professionally but also personally as we, the CAP, participate in many of our time-honoured traditions.

On behalf of the CAP Board of Directors I thank you for the privilege of representing Canadian principals and vice-principals this year and send wishes for a smooth year-end and a relaxing summer break – you have earned it.

Together we are stronger!



James Hibbs
CAP President 2005-2006

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Quality Leadership in Education

The Tree of Wellness

Self care is like a tree. A tree grows season by season, its roots digging further into the earth and its branches stretching out above. The strong roots create stability and provide the feeding system. The trunk has an internal system that receives and releases nutrients and the external bark for protection. The branches and leaves too play a vital role; there is a spaciousness, proving a mechanism for receiving and giving to the world and a beauty for all to enjoy. A tree has strength and flexibility. There are systems at play. A tree goes through cycles of productivity and renewal. A tree has a natural, automatic process to produce and care. The rhythms of nature dictate the action. While humans too have a natural rhythm we can override our nature, to push pass our own limits. Unlike a tree many people have stopped listening to the cycles of productivity and renewal.

Imagine the elements of nature, wind, rain, snow, sun, as the demands of your work and life your self the tree. The

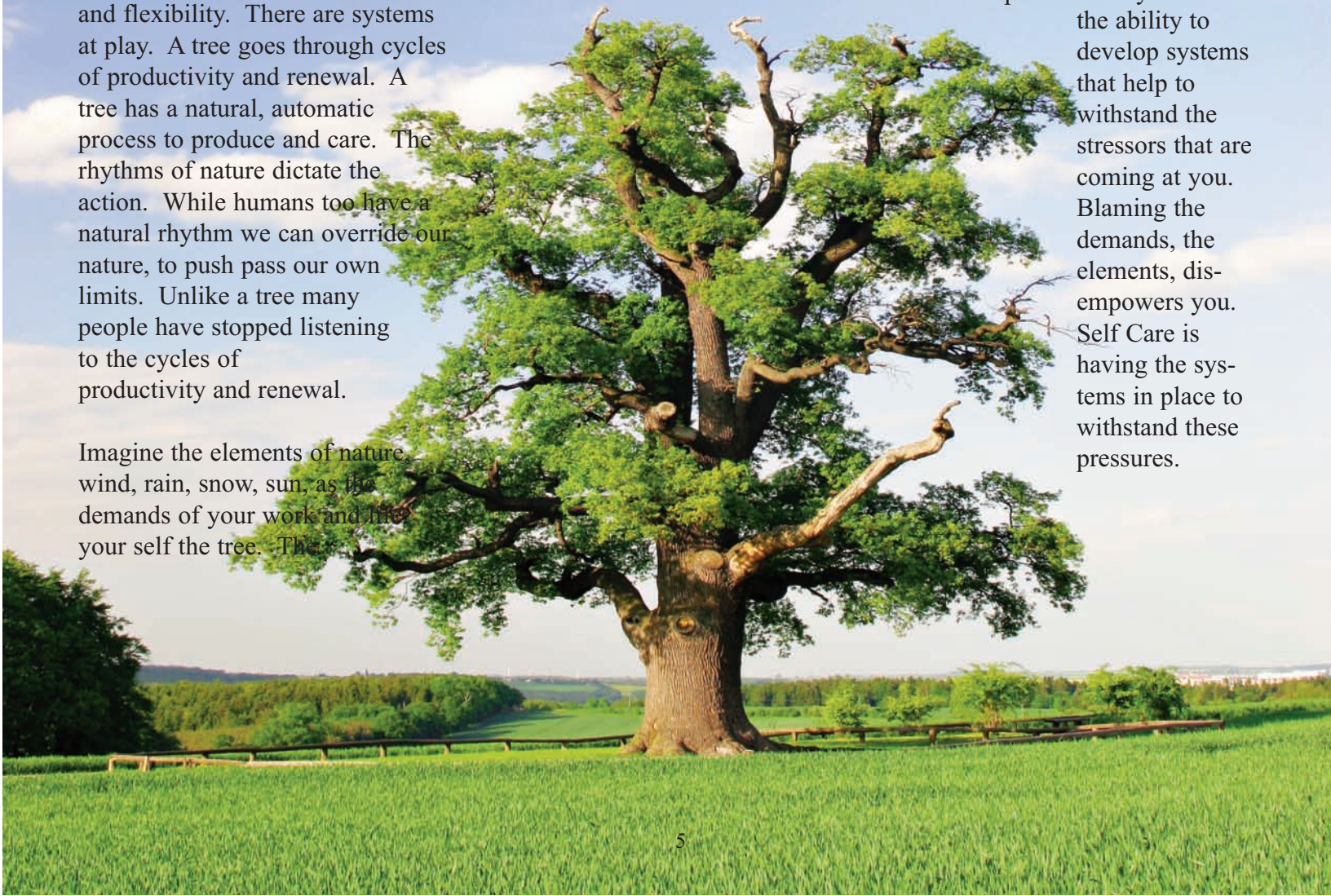
elements happen, they are out of the trees control. The tree has to go with what's coming and be prepared to withstand it. The tree cannot blame the elements it has to have systems to be part of nature without losing itself. As an administrator you have a great deal coming at you, it is part of the job. The demands are varied and many, students, parents, personnel, boards, community and of course personal life. These are the



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elements, often times there is wishful thinking that these would change and become more calm, when this does not happen we may blame them for being demanding, for causing stress. These are part of the job and are external. It is the internal process that you have the ability to develop systems that help to withstand the stressors that are coming at you. Blaming the demands, the elements, disempowers you. Self Care is having the systems in place to withstand these pressures.



If stress is the external pressure, then response is the internal mechanism utilized to systematically work within the demands. To respond is to act consciously, rather than old habitual reactions, which are most often draining. The internal response requires a commitment to develop and use techniques that at first may be uncomfortable and possibly counter-intuitive.

The challenge for you is, in your rapidly changing, fast paced environment you must create a balance of productivity and renewal. To remain healthy, your body needs time to slow down, regroup and refocus. This may seem like a waste of time but if you do not make time for renewal and restoration, you will make time for illness.

Developing a natural response to the elements of work and life means approaching this with a multiple skill set, a system of renewal and release. These include coping well with challenge, decrease negative experience, develop a healthy perspective, and increase your positive experiences.

Challenges are the nature of leadership in education. Events occur everyday and knowing these will occur means that you will not be taken by surprise when they do. You need to make a full commitment to do your best to handle the situations; not to have things perfect or for you to 'fix' it, but to manage and to help others. Know your role and requirements to control and influence what is in your domain. Identify what you have control of and what is out of your control. Put your focus on

what you can manage and change. Lastly feel motivated to take on the events to the best of your ability - running away from something only serves to disempower and create loss of control.

Having identified what is in your control there are several things you can do to sharpen your ability to cope. Feeling energized is important and there are many events or dynamics that can drain you. These negative experiences account for much of the loss of control you can feel. Consider the negative experiences that you find draining and how you can decrease them. It seems you have a few options you can choose: avoid them, confront and change them or you can delegate. If there are situations that you are tackling which are not really your concern then it is important to avoid them. Making them your business puts pressure on you and disempowers the person who really needs to deal with it. For those issues which you are responsible, make a plan and confront it. Putting it on hold only serves to worry you and drain your energy. Completing the task will be a relief and free you up to do other things. There are activities that are your responsibility that you can delegate. By assessing the negative situations and deciding how best to deal with them you create an opportunity for a win-win situation.

How you see a situation, as a crisis or an opportunity, can make the difference in whether it is energizing or not. Become an observer, of yourself and others. To be an observer requires a level of relaxation and space. The ability to pause and become curious

empowers you to be less emotionally hooked in and more capable to proceeding with ease towards constructive ends. While your life would be easier if others changed, the likelihood of others changing is dramatically small. Thus this leaves you to "*become the change you want in the world*" (Gandhi). As the curious observer you see freshly, giving the opportunity to respond in new ways.

As the observer blame no longer controls the situation. Take responsibility for what you feel whether that is frustration, anger, or another emotion and allow the situation to become a learning experience. Your perspective and attitude critically affect what you feel, if you are looking for something wrong you will find it. Seeing the positive and creating a positive outlook lightens your heart and your burden. If you wonder how to do this start by just doing it. Decide you are going to feel positive and see the good in people and situations. Seeing the challenge instead of the problem empowers you to take action, rather than feeling put upon. Your attitude about your self and your work are paramount in dealing with the demands that face you. Deciding you will take it in stride gives you the opportunity to deal with issues in a relaxed mode.

Empowerment means that you provide for yourself the opportunity to participate in life-giving activities both action oriented and relaxation. Remember time to restore is vital to your health. Just as a tree has a vascular system taking in nutrients and releasing wastes you need to create routines that allow you to build up energy and release ten-

sions. Increasing positive experiences include physical health, emotional well-being and relaxation time. These are practices that can be shared with another person or done alone.

Anyone who thinks that physical exercise is nice but optional is deluding themselves. Physical exertion allows you to release build up tension and adrenaline that occurs over time. Exercise builds strength and flexibility. The key is to build it into your daily routine, thus you do not have to make a decision each time. Consider whether there is the option to commute to work by cycling or by parking 15 minutes away from school. Make a set time to workout whether it is early morning or after dinner. Just do it! Make it work for you; a walk with a friend for 30 minutes will go a long way, both physically and emotionally.

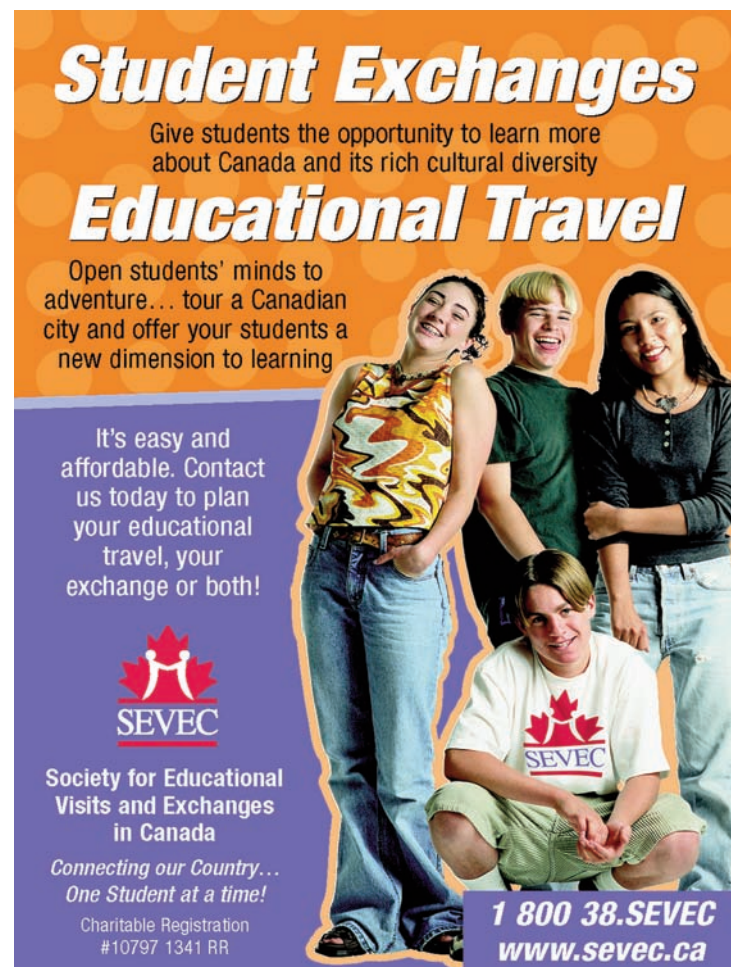
Emotional well-being allows you to create stability and flexibility internally. It promotes a calm and even approach to situations that arise, professionally and personally. Revitalizing emotional activities include talking with a friend or debriefing a difficult event, socializing with colleagues or friends, playing with children or preparing a meal. Integrating activities that get you away from the demands of the workplace and being connected to people you value enhances a balanced approach to living. Feeling connected with your spouse and family is an excellent foundation for other relationships and dynamics that require your attention. Just as a tree has periods of dormancy you need to have time

for healing and repairing, relaxation. Finding time away from your usual business even for 15 minutes a day will bring big benefits. Relaxation is slower and quieter than usual and can include a walk, being in nature, having a coffee or watching a sunset. It may be journal writing, sitting listening to music, a massage or a hot bath. Taking time to slow down and gather up your energy allows you to clear your mind, become calm and to access your inner wisdom, a friend you can always use.

Is wellness an option? The best leaders are also models. Living life in a way that is productive and serene is a balance worth seeking. Developing approaches that enhance your ability to be in the midst of work and life demands will create a way of being that is more healthy and life-giving. You will also become a model for your employees, students and friends of how life can be busy and yet calm at the same time. *Daniel Corkery wrote, "the tree turns the wind aside yet the wind that last turns the tree".* The demands of your work will continue, creating healthy ways of building up your self is

essential. Assess how you are managing in your demanding work and whether there are things you can do to enhance your systems of nurturing your self and releasing your tensions. Develop your internal and external strength and flexibility. Approach your work with a positive perspective and remember that your care is the care of those you love and work with. *"There is world of difference between knowing what to do and actually doing it" (Bill Phillips).* Get out there and do it, you are worth it.

To read more and developing the skills and practices to cope with life, pressure and setbacks consult, *The Resiliency Advantage* by Al Siebert.



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Wellness

Not Just an Apple a Day



“Wellness” has become a term that encompasses a wide range of implications with respect to education. It not only represents physical and nutritional health but also acknowledges the emotional, spiritual and professional health of everyone. Many schools make nutrition and maintaining a healthy lifestyle a priority as this area tends to be the focus with Education Departments. While this is certainly important we have to consider all aspects of wellness to support well-rounded growth in our students and maintain an effective culture for learning.

I have promoted the importance of wellness throughout my 25+ years in education but I tend to emphasize emotional and professional growth. I remember at my first Meet the Teacher nights I would tell my parents *“If your child doesn’t come home each day smiling and feeling good about himself than it doesn’t matter what I teach he won’t be learning to his potential”*. As a principal I follow that same philosophy which includes having my staff as well as my students feel connected, contributing and competent members of our school culture. These terms are used in the text *Cooperative Discipline* by Linda Albert. She emphasizes these strategies and I would suggest they include staff as well as students:

Build each student’s belief that “I can do it.”

Help every student form positive relationships with teachers and classmates.

Allow all students to contribute to the class group in their own unique ways.

Todd Whitaker writes about this in his book *“What Great Principals Do Differently.”* He says *“One of the key responsibilities of an effective leader is to create a positive atmosphere.”* It is all about looking for opportunities to make people in your care feel like they belong. It’s remembering to say something positive to each and every staff member at some point. The praise should reflect something that is real and meaningful to the growth of school wellness. I make a point of discovering individual strengths and have those strengths help build our school community. An effective leader not only leads but walks beside and allows others to take the lead when their strengths and the situation demands it.

Todd Whitaker also points out that, *“Principals who consistently model their expectations for how people should be treated give their schools a valuable gift- a gift that, in time everyone in the school can give to*

each other.” Wellness is about acknowledging everyone’s life outside as well as inside the school walls. When a teacher comes to me about her child’s concert that she wants to see. I will be the first to take her class so she doesn’t miss it. When a teacher has difficulty with a student we look at the behaviors in class as well as the extenuating circumstances that may be causing the problem. I bring in all contributing parties to determine an effective program.

Teachers need to know that you are at the forefront of establishing a positive environment that fosters and supports wellness for all.

I asked one of my staff what she felt was an important aspect of wellness and she suggested it was all about balance. I would agree with that suggestion. Our staff wellness committee works very hard to promote social outings and activities that take place at lunch or evenings and weekends. Our PD committee makes sure that our professional development is meaningful to the needs of the staff. As a school we promote hard work with an emphasis on respect and enjoyment.

Laughter is another important aspect to wellness. Marshall Brain states this in the web article titled “ How Laughter Works”, *“The psychological benefits of humor are quite amazing, according to doctors and nurses who are members of the American Association for Therapeutic Humor. People often store negative emotions, such as anger, sadness and fear, rather than expressing them. Laughter provides a way for these emotions to be harmlessly released. Laughter is cathartic. That’s why some people who are upset or stressed out go to a funny movie or a comedy club, so they can laugh the negative emotions away (these negative emotions, when held inside, can cause biochemical changes that can affect our bodies).”*

One of my favorite occasions is when I meet informally with other principals, or district personnel. It gives the players an opportunity to have

some well deserved fun but also tackle important issues with in their learning environment. We have to allow staff and students the same opportunity. With students it may be through Multi- age activities that are activity centered to allow expression within their learning styles. With teachers it may be part of a social outing or specific time scheduled during the school day for grade level or committee meetings.

Todd Whitaker states in his book “What Great Teachers Do Differently” on page 61, *“Consciously or unconsciously, we decide the tone of our classrooms and of our school.”*

One of the most important things that I can do as a principal is recognize when teachers are in need. With something as simple as an overhead in the classroom to acknowledging that the class a teacher has is truly difficult and administrators should do everything in their power to make this, and every situation better.

Part of the process of building a school that is “Well” is developing whole school activities that promote respect and friendship. Enrichment where everyone is working and sharing the same theme: i.e. Heros or Sports, whole school journal prompts that can be shared within class, with reading buddies or the whole school during announcements and Multi-age activities during Christmas, Valentines or Halloween can develop curriculum outcomes as well as a positive culture.

Finally I believe the administrator has to make their own wellness a priority. The demands of the job require a leader who has balance in their life. Having fun with staff and students is as important as discipline and organization. Making sure that life outside of school is a place that strengthens and rejuvenates is something we should all strive for.



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“it’s all about balance”



Reading, writing and wide open spaces

“For some kids, this is the highlight of their school year”

by **SARA MINOGUE**

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If you're an elementary student in Iqaluit who doesn't much like school, you have something to look forward to when you reach Grade 8.

That's when Iqaluit students get their first taste of the land program at Inuksuk High School.

“Some of the kids that are a real handful in here, really shine out there,” said Mat Knicklebein, the program's coordinator, gesturing to his empty Grade 8 classroom.

In late September, like every year, teachers at Inuksuk High spent five days ferrying about 120 students to Qaummaarviit Historic Park, about 13 km southwest of Iqaluit, for a day-long adventure with their class.

For each student, the day starts with a short boat ride to the islands off the tip of Peterhead Inlet, conducted either by Jimmy Noble Jr., a local outfitter, or Mathew Alainga, an Inuktitut teacher at Inuksuk High.

Once on the island, they take a tour of the ancient Thule sites they've spent one or two weeks studying in their social studies class.

And next spring, they get to take part two of the program — a fishing trip to Nungarut, or the Bay of Two Rivers, on the other side of Frobisher Bay. They'll travel by skidoo, and once they arrive, go ice fishing, and set up nets under the ice.

For many kids, and teachers, it's their first time on the land, and the highlight of their year.

These students will see even more next year, when as Grade 9 students, they do two more trips. One coincides with a wilderness first aid course, and includes igloo-building, lead by local masters of the craft. The next is a skidoo trip, following a firearms safety course. Boys and girls spend the day hunting, or at target practice.



About 15 Grade 8 students explore the rocks of Qaummaarviit Historic Park southwest of Iqaluit. The students took part in their first adventure with the Inuksuk High School land program in late September. (PHOTOS COURTESY OF MAT KNICKLEBEIN)



Simeonie Knicklebein takes the wheel. In addition to kids of teachers, parents of students are also welcome to join the adventures.



Mat Knicklebein: “It's been awesome.”



Kids tune in as Jimmy Noble Jr. leads a tour across the 700-metre-long island.



Students put on survival suits for the short trip to the island, about 13 km southwest of town. From left to right are: Jen Qupee, Miranda Kirk, Ita Kanayuk (seated), Nina Manning and Kaitlyn Lewis.



Inuktitut teacher Mathew Alainga brings his boat, along with passengers Davidee Nowyook, Ezra Kadloo and Zach Cousins.

The final adventure comes in either Grade 10, 11 or 12, during the northern studies course, which is mandatory for all kids graduating from Inuksuk High.

Those students take overnight trips — a hunting trip by boat in the fall, and a skidoo trip to the floe edge for seal hunting in the spring.

“Numerous student shoot their first seal, caribou, ptarmigan, rabbit... catch their first fish... and those are highlights for those kids,” Knicklebein says.

In total, the program produces about 450 land experiences each year. The adventures are part of the culmination of events that started when a group of teachers held their first meeting of the Inuksuk Land Committee about six years ago.

At the time, Inuksuk High didn’t have much of a land program to speak of. Six years later, it’s part of a tradition — one that its founders intend to maintain.

They’ve kept careful records over the years to make sure that future teachers will have everything they need to make the programs happen, even if the staff aren’t always the same.

Now, there’s talk of expanding the program to offer more to the senior grades. As it is, students can complete their Northern Studies in Grade 10, and not get another chance to go out on the land with their classmates.

The program already has strong support from principal Terry Young, and community members, including guides like Pauloosie Lucassie and Kowmageak Mitsima, who have taken the kids on the land for several years now.

Last year, the high school bought three new snowmobiles. Mathew Alainga has built several kamotiks, and helped stockpile other supplies for the trips. Teachers Mary Alikatuktuk and Malaya Audlakiak make bannock for the trips, and have sewn four big canvas tents for the program over the last two years.

There is talk now of building a cabin that can be used by the high school and the other schools in town, but more work needs to be done before that will become a reality. In the meantime, the program will continue.

“For some kids, this is the highlight of their school year. We have kids in Grade 7 saying they can’t wait.”

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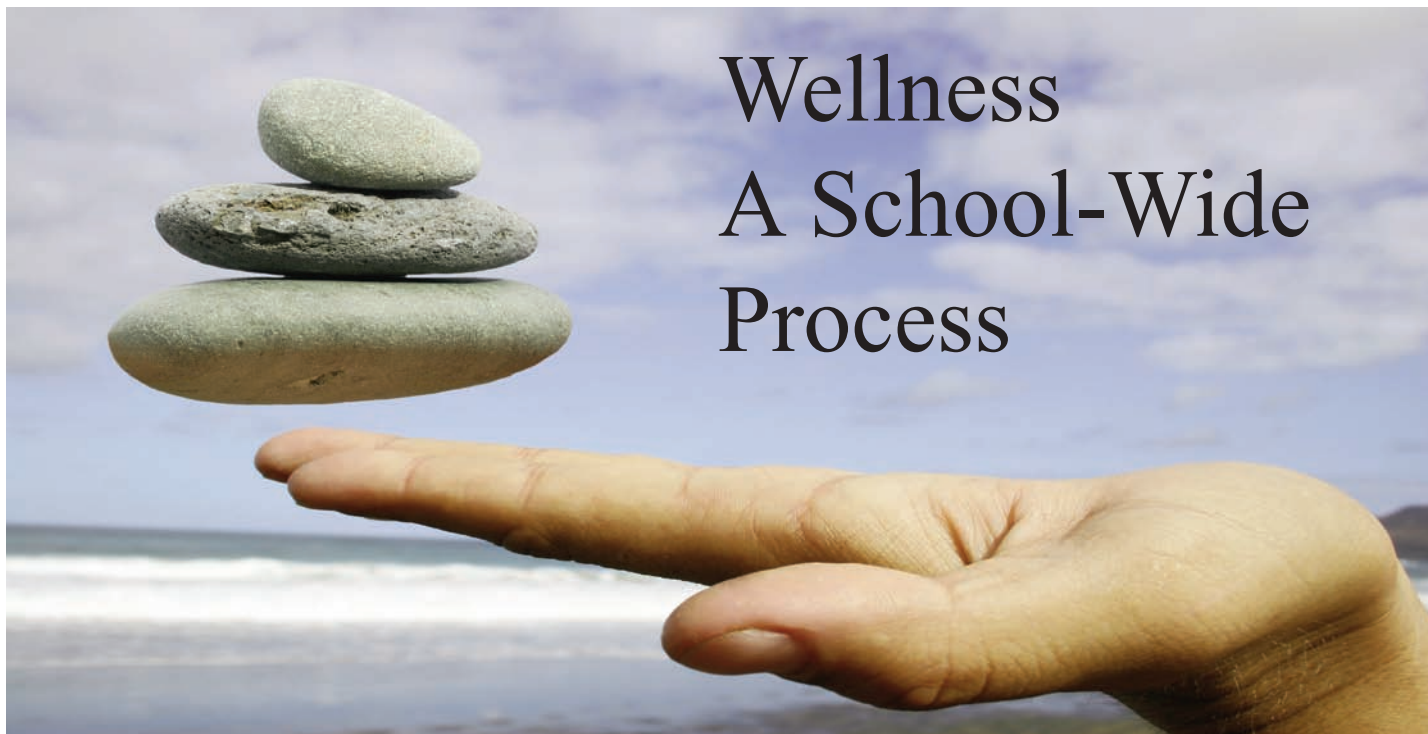


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Wellness A School-Wide Process

The sisters giggle and dance in the foyer in the early morning sun. It is 7:30 am and they have been dropped off by their mother so that she can make it to work on time. Their dad is in the hospital and has been out of work for months. Their mom has had to give up their babysitter because things are getting tight at home. So, there they are laughing and dancing in the sun.

This is just one of the many situations we deal with at our school. And I am sure we are not alone. The sisters who arrive early each morning would not be able to attend school if we did not allow them to arrive as early as they do— what other choice do we have? They are delightful girls and are quite helpful. They help us with little jobs as we get ready for our day.

Wellness and caring, when referring to schools, incorporates so many things. At our school, we try to take into consideration every single member, both staff and student, when we are talking about these concepts. There are situations which arise that require unique handling. It might be the staff member who is diagnosed with cancer and who needs help with coming up with enough resources to see her through her crisis. This type of help is not something we, as a school, are mandated to do, but doing it creates an atmosphere of caring that goes far in terms of creat-

ing an environment of wellness.

We have all witnessed students who come to school hungry and tired. And we have heard many complaints about parents who don't seem to care. We hear teachers talking about students who never do their homework, or don't have the correct supplies. But is it because the parents and the students don't care? We have decided that mostly, this apparent apathy is due to a lack of resources. Most often, the parents and students want the homework to get done, or want the student to come to school fully equipped but it is just not always possible. At our school, we have developed a homework program and we have a supply fund so that every student, no matter what home environment they come from, can get the supplies they require to do what needs to be done.

Julie Landsman in her article "Bearers of Hope" talks about the most important things we can do when looking for success in our classrooms. She suggests that we *"find ways to provide the necessities, such as winter coats, art materials, and a place to wash clothes."* She talks about looking *"into the community for resources—for example, a place for students to do homework"* (February, 2006).

We feed and clothe the students who need these things. We also provide an after-school program for our students four days per week. We looked into the needs of

our students and found that providing these things has led to success.

Our staff does more than what their positions traditionally would mandate. We have sourced many ways of obtaining clothing and footwear for our students mostly for free. We have set up free shopping days (held in our library) and every student is invited to shop, no matter what their needs may be. We have noticed that no one is made fun of for taking part and those students who really need the items get them. We also have set up a food program. We have sourced several avenues of funding to provide food for both snack and lunch for over 30% of our students every day. We provide nutritious food to those students who let their teachers know in the morning that they want the program. Once the students have identified that they require food that day, a bag of food is hung on their hook outside their classroom on time for them to eat with those students who have their own food. No one is made fun of for taking part in this program either. Any student can get food, again, no matter what their needs may be. Staff can get food as well. Sometimes, students or staff may have simply forgotten their lunch at home. We don't expect anyone to go through the day hungry.



Nel Noddings in her book *The Challenge to Care in Schools* talks about how important it is to “*listen attentively and to respond as positively as possible.*” She explains that these “*are the very hallmarks of caring*” (xiv). In this age of accountability, we ask our students and our staff for their very best. We are measuring their efforts by providing various forms of assessments. But how can we expect the very best if we do not offer a somewhat level playing field. If people are hungry and tired and if they are cold and uncomfortable, how can they achieve excellence?

While it is foolish for us to believe that we can take care of all the needs of our students and staff, we believe that it is foolish to ignore them. To the best of our ability, we try to take care of what we can. We have been doing this for the past few years and we are seeing a difference.

Our attendance rates have increased by approximately 10%. We have gone from approximately 80% turn out at parent-teacher interviews to almost 98% . And for the last two years we have been collecting data on our reading levels and have noticed an increase of approximately 10% from last year to this. We are proud of these substantial increases. While we cannot attribute these changes totally to our wellness program, we feel our caring environment goes far in helping people reach their goals.

Another of our practices is that we greet both staff and students as they arrive in the morning. We see smiles and a sense of belonging as they head to their classrooms and offices. We can also provide help to those we notice who need an ear or a voice and we can feed and provide comfort to those who have had a bad night.

We are all familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Yet we hear of many students who have had to endure sitting in a classroom all day hungry, or have been so tired they could not keep their eyes open. Often, these students become behavioural problems because they have made poor choices due to their circumstances. We have noticed that once their basic needs are addressed, then they (both students and staff) can get down to the business of teaching and learning.

Our giggling little girls, twirling in the morning sunlight, are a welcome sight for all as we enter the building. The sisters open the door and have stories of their evening's adventures for those who enter. They carry heavy bags to classrooms and put precious work up on walls in the corridors. They race up to the office to tell us that the buses are here, all the while they giggle and smile. They are an everyday reminder that caring and wellness are as vital to education as the most important assessments. They provide to us, as all our students do, an opportunity to learn how to be "bearers of hope" in a place that is full of possibilities.

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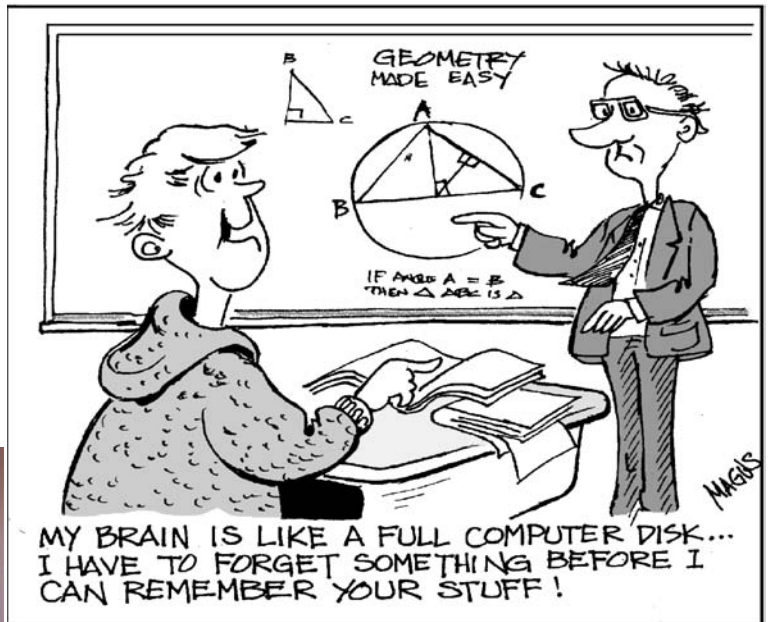


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On the Lighter side.....



My school project is to find ways to save electricity, so I un-plugged the fridge before we went to bed because we don't use it during the night.

My First



100 Days



**Attached by bees,
enlightened by a starfish
and anchored by a plan**

By Kevin Battaglia



of Principals

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The greatest motivation for strategy is necessity. For me, that necessity was the paralyzing fear of failure. In December 2002, the Toronto District School Board, in its dubious wisdom, appointed me principal of Rockcliffe Middle School—a wonderfully challenging and diverse inner-city school. I had worked hard to achieve this position. This was my big chance - my own school to mould and nurture. I celebrated, but the next morning as I lay in bed, a question began to haunt me: “OK, I got the job...now what do I do?”

That morning, I spent some time reflecting on everything I had learned about leadership from my mentors (both in-person and in literature). I spent time analyzing myself as a leader, articulating my strengths and weaknesses. I came to the conclusion that as a leader I was long on passion and short on everything else. To be effective, I needed to lead not just with passion, but also with purpose. I needed a plan.

In this article, I will share some of the key elements of the entry plan I

began to write that morning, reveal a few humbling experiences and communicate some of what I have learned along the way.

Entry Plan Notes:
Rockcliffe MS

*Go with my instincts—but don't
make the same mistake twice*

By the end of my first month I realized that as a rookie principal, especially a 31-year-old rookie, most people would assume I had no clue what I was doing. I decided to accept that reality and use it to my advantage. Since I was expected to make rookie mistakes I decided to go with my gut—to ask for forgiveness rather than permission. Those of you who are reading this thinking “Uh oh!” are much smarter than I was in my first few weeks as a principal. My supervisory officer is a patient and kind woman (evidenced by the fact that I still have a job). Her assistant and I became fast friends out of necessity: typical phone calls to her office began with, “Kevin...what were you thinking?” or, “Kevin, I had to remind her again that you are

new. She is calm now. I'll put you through to her office.” Two years later the safety net is gone. My instincts are more refined and I have learned the difference between courageous, “out of the box” creativity and cavalier “this could cost you your job” creativity.

*Decide what I value—then find a
way to measure it*

One of my mentors constantly referred to the motto “If you can't measure it, you can't improve it.” I committed myself to investing time and energy into establishing baseline data. Without taking the time early on to collect that information, I knew my team would run around in circles and then wonder what, if anything, we had achieved. In my entry plan, I focused on improving student lates, student safety and student achievement (as measured by standardized tools). Two years later, I am pleased with some, but not all, of our indicators of success. Lates are down and indications of student safety are up, but too many students remain academically at-risk and that continues to drive our school improvement plan.

Develop and utilize my support networks —I need all the friends I can get

During my first few months as a principal, I was on unsure footing. I wasn't sure who I could trust. I decided that if I was going to ask a dumb question, I would ask it of someone whom I had known for a while. I surmised that at least they would know I was capable of intelligent thinking, whereas new people would only have this idiotic question on which to form an opinion of me.

Two years later my footing is surer and I have learned how to ask an idiotic question of a complete stranger with my head held high. During my first few principal's meetings, I learned that when you ask a question and everyone in the room turns and gives you the "I guess they're promoting anyone with a pulse these days" look, to just smile sheepishly and wave.

Change only what needs to be changed—stability is important

Prior to accepting my position as principal, I had heard horror stories of new principals walking into schools with guns blazing, looking to make their mark, only to have their staff plotting a mutiny by the end of their first week.

I knew on my first day at Rockcliffe that I had great staff who worked hard. My biggest mistake would have been to act before listening to and learning from them. The first week on the job I asked each staff member these

questions: "What is great about this school?" "What can I help to improve?" "What are your goals?" "How can I help you achieve them?"

Two years later, many things have changed, but the foundation of the building remains the same: great teachers doing great things in classrooms while I do whatever I can to support, mentor and serve them.

Establish a visible presence

Visible principals realize a fundamental reality: when we drive by a police speed trap we slow down. And we make a mental note to slow down every time we pass that section of road in the future. The police only need to be there one time to slow us down for weeks. That is why visible principals make the time to walk their hallways and foyers regularly throughout the day.

Being visible can also be an entertaining way to spend time. I recall a day, early in my first year, when I was outside at lunchtime. I had spent the morning in front of my computer so I was itching for a human problem to solve or crisis to avert. I saw a Grade 6 student running towards me. I knew this meant action because, in a middle school, Grade 6s are your most reliable informants. The older students keep their cards close to the vest but the Grade 6s are human security cameras.

The little boy, gasping for breath, told me that he had seen a group of

Grade 8 girls smoking cigarettes by the creek at the edge of our property. I thanked him and began my "power walk" to the creek. There I found, as reported, a small group of girls huddled together with smoke rising from the centre. In my best principal voice I summoned them to me and, with spirited conviction, began outlining all the reasons they should not be smoking. About a minute into an impassioned thesis, I noticed that there were several bees flying around me, but I ignored them. I was on a mission. I knew this speech would convince the girls never to smoke again. A few bees would not distract me.

After another minute I felt a strange irritation inside my left pant leg. This got my attention. I paused. It took me a few seconds to realize that a bee had flown up my pant leg and another second to determine that it was headed north. I thrust one hand down the front of my pants and the other hand up the pant leg. I began hopping up and down on one foot in a way that may have appeared as if I was dancing a jig. At that point, the fervour of my anti-smoking message was lost. I knew this by looking at the faces of the girls who tried desperately to hold in their laughter.

Invest in excellence

There is nothing more energizing for a school than a celebration of excellence. Like a financial advisor, I knew that my first moves needed to be high-reward and low-risk. Spending time creating

capacity and motivating excellence are great openings in one's entry plan. There is a quote I share with students: "Without hard work and dedication, talent and potential are meaningless." All schools have talented kids, but great schools create a capacity for achievement.

Motivating excellence is particularly challenging in middle schools because, by nature, young teenagers strive for acceptance. That desire drives everyone to the middle—everyone wants to fly under the radar. Excellence, by definition, is exceptional. Worse, in order to achieve excellence, one most likely has had to be compliant to an adult who has helped them achieve. Exceptionality and compliance are two values that are not esteemed by young adolescents.

At Rockcliffe, we took immediate steps to promote excellence. We used Herb Carnegie's Future Aces Creed as a foundation. We had Toronto Raptor Chris Bosh attend one of our "Student of the Month" celebrations. When students achieve excellence in the classroom, we hang a gold medal around their neck just like we do when they win an athletic competition. We motivate achievement with everything from free lunches at Mandarin to invitations to Much Music Video Dances. It takes a commitment of energy, time and money, but it is an investment worth making.

Demonstrate and discuss equity

On my office door there is a sign

that reads,

*In this office,
FAIR
does not mean that
everyone gets the same.
It means that everyone
gets what they need.*

Some schools aim to provide equal treatment for all students. Their rules are the same for everyone—all students are equal. Great schools recognize inequity. They recognize that every student is important but that none are the same. Students have different lives, different challenges and different abilities. Great schools act courageously and decisively, often in the face of popular opinion, to level the playing field and provide equity rather than equality.

Find a starfish

I heard a story about an old man who was walking along a beach. He came upon an area where thousands of starfish had washed ashore. A girl was picking up the starfish, one at a time, and tossing them back into the ocean. The old man approached her and said, "Why are you doing that? You can't make a difference. There are too many. You can't save them all." The girl responded, "I can make a difference for this one," and she tossed another into the ocean.

The final part of my entry plan was to use my new office to support, mentor and advocate for students who needed it. This commitment was born from the realization that,

as a principal, I was sometimes a child's last line of defence. When parents and teachers were frustrated and fed up, it was my responsibility to keep trying, keep focused and build on small successes.

Sometimes you don't find a starfish, the starfish finds you. I met Kareem* three times during my first day at Rockcliffe. Twice I found him on the bench in the main office after being kicked out of class. The third time, I found him in the hallway after losing an intramural basketball game. His fists were clenched tight enough to turn coal into diamonds. He didn't want to stop or talk. He just wanted to find the guy who had made him angry and unleash that anger on him. Kareem spent the rest of the day working and talking with me in my office. From that day on, Kareem and I have been moving forward together. It is a mentorship that works for both of us. He is not perfect, nor am I, but we trust the inherent good in each other even when we disagree. On the days when I spend too many hours in front of a computer screen, talking to Kareem reminds me that I have the best job in the world...I get to make a difference for this one.

**Student's name has been changed to protect his privacy.*

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• Herbert H. Carnegie Future Aces Foundation. www.futureaces.org.

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Whose Wellness?

Theirs or ours?

By Cindy Matthews



Ms. Matthews currently works as a vice-principal of Section 20 classes (all special education) in Ontario. She manages six sites plus an enrichment centre so she has first-hand knowledge about working with her own stress levels. She has worked as a teacher and counsellor in community col-

lege, secondary and elementary settings during my 24 years as a teacher. Ms. Matthews has a double-specialist in special education and guidance as well as her principals' qualifications.

It is Friday at 4:07 p.m. as the elementary school principal flips through the seven pink message slips piled up on her desk. One says urgent in the message line. It is Mrs. Williams again. With the click of a mouse, she observes the red flags in the electronic in-basket. She notices Sally standing inside the door jam of her office. She is the queen of, 'Got a minute to see me'. The ring of the telephone saves her. It is the variety store owner from across the street. As she punches the store telephone number, which she knows off by heart, she rubs the wrinkly rut between her eyes. This is no way to begin the weekend.

Much focus of late has gone into how principals can motivate staff to be their personal and professional best in order to improve student test scores. Professional development dollars for staff training have helped to empower teachers to gain knowledge so they can put their best foot forward with student success as the goal. Resources have been plentiful and teachers felt valued again.

But who has cared about the administrators? Some have lost connections with their federation. The central offices downloaded more responsibilities onto administrators. School councils became the vehicles to question the practices of administrators. Further, the federations developed such constricting contractual agreements that administrators felt strapped by the constraints held within those pages. Finally, administrators have felt isolated, not affiliated with the teachers' unions and too over-burdened to connect with administrative peers. Who was caring about the stressed-out administrators and what was to be done about it? How could administrators be strong leaders within their buildings if *they* felt demoralized?

I'm number one:

By nature, we administrators are compassionate people who consider others at all times. Students, teachers and support staff, parents and guardians, community stakeholders, the list goes on and on. It is a constant balancing act. However, in order to be able to give to others, we 'givers' need to be healthy both physically and emotionally and that translates into taking time for us.

So what?

When we do not take time to refresh ourselves, to put

things into perspective, to ‘chill’, then stress can take its toll. The brain is designed to respond with emotion during a stressful time and that emotion can be intense. When the ‘fight’ of a particularly stressful moment flies by, fatigue settles in. That is the body and brain’s way of telling us to relax and rest up so can be ready for the next ‘fight’.

180 over 110:

The mind-body connection is a beautiful thing. When overly stressed, the body tells the mind to pay attention. How? Unexplained skin rashes, tension headaches, sleep deprivation, hypertension, unexplained weight gain or loss, depression and irritability are some of the body’s way of reacting.

When we ignore the body’s messages to the brain, we lose an opportunity to practice R, R, and R (aka rest, relaxation and restoration). The 3 Rs (and you thought they were reading, writing and ‘rithmetic) provide the overly stressed body and mind time for renewal and revitalization. Without renewal, daily stress multiplies until it causes long-term, serious medical ailments.

All is not lost:

Recognizing that our stress has become harmful is helpful. This gives us a wake-up call, an opportunity to develop an action plan. In order to chase the stress demons away it is necessary to find a roadmap, which gives clear direction and permission to act. Friends, exercise, meditation, golf, art therapy, dance lessons, vacation, aromatherapy, or long walks—any and all are helpful to prevent long-term stress. Take action fast. It could save a life. Yours!

Watch out for potholes:

Administrators are highly skilled, intelligent people and excellent at creating excuses to *not* look after number one.

We have heard these statements or said them ourselves:

‘I don’t have time to get to the gym.’

‘I can’t believe it; I’ve put on another five pounds without even trying.’

‘I’m too tired to work out.’

‘How can I fit one more thing into my already super

busy day?’

‘I have no energy as is. Now you expect me to go to the gym?’

‘It’s too dark.’

‘It’s too grey.’

‘I don’t have childcare.’

‘I don’t want to.’

‘It’s my genes. I can’t help it.’

‘I’ve always needed to diet. I just can’t seem to lose weight.’

The list goes on and on. The excuses, though, permit us to fall prey to the stress so that it wins the battle over us. Before long, we exempt ourselves of all responsibility to take charge over de-stressing. Rather than looking at our shortcomings with honest glasses, we point the finger away from ourselves, concocting grandiose excuses to NOT participate in a de-stressing plan. Look at the energy that strategy takes!

But I really don’t have time:

In order to tackle stress management, part of each day must be devoted to the planning for de-stressing and implementation of that plan. Specific goals for the de-stressing plan must be written down with specifics outlined.

“I will go to the pool three mornings this week, specifically Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, prior to the onset of my work day. I plan to work out during the scheduled aqua-fit classes from 7:00 – 7:30 a.m.”

OR

“I will join the new water colour painting class which runs from 7:00 – 9:30 p.m. for the next six Thursday evenings, beginning May 22.”

When the plan is vague and merely a mental concept, commitment to the de-stressing plan fades with the wind. We write down the myriad of meetings we must attend, so must we hold true to the de-stressing plan and write its details down in our day planners.

Find some support hose:

We cannot do the administrator’s job alone. Through allegiances and networking opportunities with administrative colleagues, we can provide affirmation for each other as well as a sounding board for the numerous ‘new situations’, which arise. Further, an idea like making a breakfast date with like-minded colleagues provides camaraderie and opportunities to brainstorm

initiatives and concepts.

Have a sense of ha ha:

It is no laughing matter. The job of administrator of a school is stressful with much potential to use decision-making, communication and problem-solving skills. Administrators constantly have to think, balance, negotiate and listen. All of these skills take huge amounts of energy. With the downloading that has happened through Ministry and central office initiatives, it is no wonder that some days leave a bitter taste on the tongue. It is our duty to us to find time to laugh, right out loud, from deep in the belly. Our duty? Yes! If we do not make time to laugh and release the tension, the pressure tightens in us like a snake positioning to strike.

Help! I need somebody:

It is perfectly okay to ask for help. In fact, delegation is a great management tool. Nowhere in the principal training courses was it emphasized that WE have to do it all. Look around your staff. Decide whom you could solicit to share responsibilities. By doing this you not only release some of the 'jobs' you do not have to do but you also become a mentor to a new leader in your building. Staff will appreciate that, too.

Similarly, when planning to delegate, think about your home life, too. Perhaps your partner can take on some of the cooking. For those administrators who have children, ask yourselves if those offspring share some of the home chores? If not, why not start with goal setting in this regard? Do you have the resources to hire someone to assist with taking care of some of your burdensome chores at home?

I'll just do it later:

Some people are procrastinators and some people have to do it yesterday. If you tend to procrastinate, think about the implications that attitude and the resulting behaviour place on your stress levels. When you leave everything to the last minute, you provide yourself with an opportunity to rush, panic and become flustered with yourself. The result is that other people then pound on your door to remind you that you are tardy again! The ultimate product of this type of planning is simply more stress.

I know. I'll start saving wine corks:

Self-medicating through overuse of alcohol, caffeine, other drugs (prescription or otherwise), and food can lower the immune system's reserve function. Making healthy food choices and portion selections is recommended for maintaining balance. Moderate alcohol and caffeine usage is preferred. How many times have you caught yourself not eating lunch? Making the choice of what and how much you eat is important but so is just finding time to eat. Regular sleep (on your side or back) is also optimal for good stress management.

It doesn't get any better than this:

It's absolutely win-win. De-stressing helps to reduce production of a nasty hormone called cortisol which research has shown increases abdominal fat and muscle breakdown. Yuck! So, why not feel like a million dollars by de-stressing through YOUR favourite means. Become playful. Scamper. Go golfing. Indulge yourself, not with self-medication through artificial means but through having fun. No time! Think again. Via play, you will manage to decrease your belly fat AND increase production of endorphins, those happy-hormones. The choice is yours.

Since our role is to be caretaker, energizer, motivator, communicator, and keeper of all that is good, we have to remember to look after number one first. When we have done that every single day, we have something left over to give to all the others demanding our attention.

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Using Electronic Portfolios to Help Students Become Self-regulated Learners

By Anne Wade,
Philip C. Abrami &
Beverley White

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of a student's effort, progress and/or achievement in one or more areas (Arter and Spandel, 1992; MacIsaac and Jackson, 1994). Danielson and Abrutyn (1997) identified three main types of portfolios: working, showcase, and assessment. Working (also known as "process" or "learning") portfolios contain works in progress, track student learning over time, and may be temporary because students move on to either an assessment or showcase portfolio. Showcase portfolios traditionally exhibit the student's best work. They are generally used to demonstrate the level of accomplishment that the student has attained. Assessment portfolios are structured and standardized with "the content of the curriculum determining what students select for their portfolios" (Danielson and Abrutyn, 1997, p.5).

Digital or Electronic Portfolios

In the past, portfolios were collections of work stored in binders, file folders, or boxes. Today, computers are used as an effective tool for developing and storing portfolios given their ability to store and process large quantities of content, and because they can effectively support and guide the portfolio process. There are many advantages to using digital portfolios. Students can easily integrate multimedia materials, allowing them to use a variety of tools to demonstrate and develop understanding. Student work becomes easy to share with peers, teachers, parents and others, and lets students and others provide feedback through a single electronic container. And they provide remote access for students' completion of homework or when learning at a distance, for teachers for review and assessment purposes, and for parents to improve communication.



Supporting Self Regulation

Educators believe that portfolios allow students to think critically, and become active, independent and self-regulated learners (Perry, 1998; Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991). Self-regulated learners are individuals who are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning. Metacognition refers to the awareness, knowledge and control of cognition. The three processes that make up metacognitive self-regulation are planning, monitoring, and regulating.

The CSLP e-portfolio Software

The Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance (CSLP) is a research centre of excellence based at Concordia University in Montreal. The CSLP works actively with partners in the field to research and develop technology-based tools designed to improve student learning. In 2003, the CSLP developed a bilingual, web-based e-portfolio tool that may be considered as both a Process (or Learning) and Showcase Portfolio tool designed to encourage self-regulated learners (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Wade, Abrami & Sclater, 2005). It is currently in use in a piloting and research model in the majority of Quebec English school boards. We expect to generalize its use with the release of the new model (August 15, 2006) and the delivery of training sessions in portfolio structures.

The Student Environment

All the commands offered within the software are selected from the main student page. These include: the selection of an interface from a dozen templates; the creation of new work using a text editor or the linking to work created outside the software (e.g. using applications software); the editing of existing work; the setting of learning goals; the reflection on work; the conferencing with a peer, teacher or parent; the selection of work to be sent to the showcase; and the viewing and customization of their showcase portfolio. The student may click on a piece to view or listen to it. The inclusion of a recorder allows students to read directly into their portfolio, and, for younger students, to record their reflections and conferences.

Current Activities

Our activities are currently guided by four main objectives: (1) To work with our partner school boards, the LEARNING Communities-RECIT¹ and English Language Arts consultants to create an intensive “portfolio” culture within a research sample of Quebec English schools. We hope to learn more about the core processes which underlie the use of portfolios and about effective online professional development material as revealed in the scholarly literature; (2) To work towards the full integration of three existing digital portfolio tools into one suite of bilingual, evidence-based portfolio process tools designed for different age groups within schools; (3) To ensure that adequate bilingual material is provided within the software to support teacher/student use of the software and teachers’ understanding of the fundamental processes supported by the software; and (4) To obtain feedback about the software from the teachers and to learn about the quantity/quality of the use of the software in the pilot research schools.

Conclusion

The CSLP believes that our approach to research, development and dissemination—which focuses on evidence-based practice—provides opportunities for our partners, in particular, and the educational community, in general, to have active input into all phases of these projects. It will also provide them with ownership over the outcomes and genuine opportunities to reap the benefits of effective pedagogical practices.

The software may be viewed at: <http://grover.concordia.ca/eportfolio/promo/> We welcome others to use our tools which are available at no cost and to partner with us in research and development.

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¹ The RECIT is a network of REsource people for the development of student Competencies using Information and communication Technology (ICT).

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The Canadian Association of Principals
Announce
**The CAP Distinguished Principal of the Year
And the
The CAP Distinguished Vice-Principal of the Year
for 2005-2006**

Mr. Bob Braybrook of Aberdeen School in Aberdeen, Saskatchewan has been named the CAP Distinguished Principal of the Year 2005-2006. Mr. Braybrook has enjoyed a successful teaching career over the past nineteen years as a teacher in addition to his experience as an in-school administrator over the past eight years.

Mr. Braybrook shares his philosophy of student learning, *“As an educator, I believe that all students can learn and achieve. With the right supports, all students will succeed and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. When they misbehave it is most often with a reason behind it. It is our job to work to find ways to help students learn and achieve to the best of their abilities and to challenge them to reach even higher at all times. We offer a very innovative program at Aberdeen School that supports this philosophy very well. Our Academic Credit and Career Training program (ACCT) is designed to offer programming to students from grades 8-12 who possess learning difficulties, behavioural problems and have had challenges in the regular classroom. It offers students an opportunity to achieve their academic credits to graduate as well as work experience opportunities throughout their high school years on alternating school days. We have witnessed a very high success rate in this program. It requires a tremendous amount of administrative and staff support as these types of students are not always easy to work with. As a leader, our support to teachers in their own professional growth has truly enhanced our students’ success overall. We have promoted a shared leadership approach where staff is invited to join one of the “ACE” committees which enhance the learning environment in Academic, Climate and Extra-curricular activities. Teacher PLC groups are supported and encouraged. With students, we have promoted student leadership and this has truly had a*

positive impact on our school. I believe a shared leadership approach through collaboration with staff and students has served us well. We have much to be proud of at ACS and I am happy to be a part of it!”

The Canadian Association of Principals and McDonalds’ Restaurants of Canada (sponsors of this award) congratulate Bob Braybrook on his accomplishment. Bob is truly a worthy recipient of this prestigious award!

Ms. Deanna Holitzki of L.V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson, BC has been named the CAP Distinguished Vice-Principal of the Year 2005-2006. Ms. Holitzki was nominated by the principal of L.V. Rogers Secondary School, M. G. McIndoe, who wrote, *“What set Deanna apart from any other vice-principal I have worked with are her leadership skills. This young lady is an excellent teacher who inspires and leads both her colleagues and teaching staff in both her own school and other schools in this community. Her ‘vision of leadership’ is one that is current, inspiring and tireless. She is an advocate for current learning theory and leads through examples set in her own classroom. In short, Deanna is the perfect example of the young educational leader who through her practice and conviction is having a very positive effect upon school culture and achievement in this and other community schools.”*

Deanna’s philosophy of student learning states, *“While it may be a cliché, I believe that all students can learn and do want to achieve. This principle guides my interactions with all students and staff. I have enormous respect for students, and for the dedicated professionals that work with them. In order to honour the respect that I have for students and staff, I try to listen intently – both to what they say and to what is between the lines. I value the diversity of my students and staff,*

and believe firmly that through listening carefully I can most effectively help students and staff achieve their potential and beyond. I also truly believe that as educators, we are charged with a moral responsibility – of valuing and honouring every student in our buildings, of ensuring that we conduct ourselves in the most professional manner possible in order to provide the best learning environment for students, and of focusing every effort on maximizing student success. I see myself to be a facilitator – of learning and self-discovery for both students and staff. I believe, too, that in this pursuit of learning and of knowledge-building, that students should be engaged and enjoying what they are doing.”

The Canadian Association of Principals and Herff Jones, Canada (sponsors of this award) congratulate Deanna Holitzki on her accomplishment. As this is

the first year that a separate award has been established for vice-principals, Deanna is the first vice-principal in Canada to receive the CAP Distinguished Vice-Principal of the Year Award. Congratulations Deanna, you are most deserving!

Both award winners are honoured with conference registration, flight and accommodations to the CAP annual conference.

CAP would like to express its appreciation to the sponsors of these awards, McDonalds’ Restaurants of Canada and Herff Jones, Canada. Without their sponsorship these awards would not be possible. If you would like to nominate a principal or vice-principal for next year’s awards please visit www.cdnprincipals.org.

Canada’s Outstanding Principals’ Awards

The Canadian Association of Principals is pleased to have once again partnered with The Learning Partnership to celebrate the ‘Principalship’ in Canada. The Learning Partnership 2006 Canada’s Outstanding Principals program is a unique opportunity that recognizes the crucial role principals play in our publicly funded school system.

Congratulations to the 2006 Canada’s Outstanding Principals. These men and women make an immeasurable contribution to the community and help ensure quality education for Canada’s young people.

Alberta

Carol Johnson	Innisfail Middle School	Innisfail
Fay Kerwood	Monterey Park Elementary School	Calgary

British Columbia

Victor Bifano	South Kamloops Secondary School	Kamloops
Patrick Duncan	Cowichan Secondary School	Duncan
Susan MacNeil	Pearson Road Elementary School	Kelowna
Janine Roy	George Jay Elementary School	Victoria

Manitoba

Garry Giesbrecht	Elmdale School	Steinbach
Jeffrey McIntyre	Ecole Riverside School	Thompson

New Brunswick

Sally Richards	George Street Middle School	Fredericton
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Newfoundland

David Antle	Exploits Valley High	Grand Falls-Windsor
Paul Rose	Humber Elementary School	Corner Brook

Nova Scotia

Phillip Legere	Dartmouth High School	Dartmouth
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Northwest Territories

Velma Illasiak	Moose Kerr School	Aklavik
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Nunavut

Lena Metuq	Alookie School	Pangnirtung
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Ontario

Charles Austin	Pinecrest Public School	Ottawa
Patricia Blake	C.H. Norton Public School	Burlington
Roger Dale	Kipling Collegiate Institute	Toronto
Mary-Jane Jones	Pope Paul VI Elementary School	Toronto
Susan MacDonald	Chester Le Jr. Public School	Toronto
Leona McEwan	St. Ann Separate School	Thunder Bay
Mary-Ann Nova	R.A. Sennett Public School	Whitby
Stephen Redmond	St. Michael Catholic School	Guelph
Patrick Rocco	Orchard Park Secondary School	Stoney Creek
Scott Sincerbox	Prince of Wales Elementary School	Hamilton
Sydney Zyla	St. Joan of Arc High School	Barrie

Prince Edward Island

Cynthia MacDonald	Westwood Primary School	Cornwall
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Quebec

Joseph Urovitch	Mary Gardner School	Chateauguay
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Saskatchewan

Michael Collins	Warman High School	Warman
Suzanne Zwarych	Humboldt Collegiate Institute	Humboldt

Yukon

Thomas Jirousek	Ross River School	Ross River
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This is the second in a series of articles prepared by or on behalf of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation for the *CAP Journal*. This series is part of a new partnership between CAP and the Foundation aimed at providing principals and vice-principals across the country with information about the Foundation's Millennium Research Program and, in particular, the Foundation's work around overcoming barriers to post-secondary studies beginning at the high school level. The first article looked at students' lack of financial aid literacy and the sources of this problem.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation is a private, independent organization created by an act of Parliament in 1998. The Foundation works to improve access to post-secondary education for Canadians from all backgrounds, it encourages a high level of achievement and engagement in Canadian society, and it brings people and organizations together to understand barriers and improve access to post-secondary education. For more information on the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the Millennium Research Program, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.millenniumscholarships.ca

Examining strategies to improve post-secondary access and success

Experts concerned with Canada's performance in the global economy generally agree that innovation and productivity are partly the result of a highly educated workforce. Yet while Canadian workers are among the world's best trained, the benefits of post-secondary education continue to elude many young people.

Cost is recognized as a formidable barrier; however, it is only one of several. Poor information, and a lack of family or community support also erect obstacles to greater educational opportunity. Even fundamental realities such as distance from post-secondary institutions can prove insurmountable. These barriers are compounded for students from low-income households, students from families in which neither parent has previously pursued any form of post-secondary study, and students from certain communities, including those from First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

In support of efforts to improve post-secondary access and increase the numbers of students who pursue higher learning, the Canada Millennium Scholarship

Foundation has launched five pilot projects to examine and test the effectiveness and efficiency of specific strategies to remove post-secondary barriers. This article looks at the first of these five projects, a project launched in Manitoba and New Brunswick in 2004-2005.

While each project has specific goals, all target a demographic traditionally under-represented in post-secondary education: students from minority groups and low-income families, or those whose parents did not pursue post-secondary education themselves.

Partnering with provincial governments

Future to Discover (FTD), a partnership between the Foundation and each of the governments of Manitoba and New Brunswick, delivers advanced career-development training and post-secondary information to high school students in grades 10 through 12 (senior 2 to 4 in Manitoba).

"Future to Discover is a cornerstone of the New Brunswick government's Quality Learning Agenda," said Margie Layden-Oreto, FTD project manager for the New Brunswick Department of Education. "We hope the project will support our students' success-

ful transitions from high school to further learning and training, so there's keen interest in New Brunswick to learn whether FTD's interventions actually work."

Manitoba's FTD project manager believes there's equal interest in her province: "It's important to remember that current knowledge on the effectiveness of career-development programming is largely anecdotal," said Connie Drystek of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. "FTD's isolated career-development counselling—approximately 25 hours over three years—is a big leap beyond what students have traditionally received. By measuring the impact of FTD's interventions, we'll learn how they can be integrated to increase the numbers of students who not only pursue post-secondary education, but who also stick with their choices."

A total of approximately 5,400 randomly selected, volunteer students from 51 English and French high schools are participating in the project. Over six years (five in Manitoba), FTD will follow students as far as the second year of post-secondary studies.

The project has been tailored to the specific educational goals of each province. In Manitoba, FTD's cen-

tral component is *Explore Your Horizons*, which is intended to counter misinformation and poor knowledge about post-secondary programs.

Explore Your Horizons includes three interventions:

Career Focusing, an innovative process in which students explore occupational choices based on passions rather than skills.

Lasting Gifts, a senior-3 (Grade 11) activity that includes parents and guardians in students' career exploration work.

Future in Focus, which builds senior-4 (Grade 12) students' resilience, helping them develop active support networks, explore the value of community engagement, and learn how to work through unexpected challenges.

FTD contains an additional component in New Brunswick, where *Learning Accounts* offers a financial incentive of up to \$8,000 to students who complete high school and enrol in post-secondary studies. *Learning Accounts* is available only to students from families with incomes below the provincial median.

Pilot-project participants in both provinces also gain access to a dedicated website, and receive bi-annual issues of a specially prepared magazine. Both these tools deliver targeted, concise information about post-secondary benefits and opportunities.

FTD on the ground

Pilot-project manager Yves Pelletier notes that career development must focus on all post-secondary paths—apprenticeships and vocational training, as well as college and university. “There are high school students who are falling through the cracks,” said Pelletier. “Some students in the ‘C’ range, for example, are writing themselves off. It’s central to our mandate to reach out to these young people, to make them aware that there are post-secondary opportunities for everyone.”

Project components are delivered by trained facilitators and Post-Secondary Ambassadors (PSAs)—a diverse group of young people currently enrolled in provincial post-



High school students and their parents participate in workshop about career options and post-secondary financing.

secondary programs. PSAs work closely with project participants, helping to instil the value of post-secondary education, prepare students for life after high school, and bridge the student/teacher communication gap in FTD sessions.

“I want to tell students that there are no barriers to getting an education, and that they can always find a way to get one,” said PSA and

university student Eric Savoie. “Never stop exploring. Ask questions; seek answers. Consider the opinions of other people, but make decisions for yourself.”

“It’s particularly powerful when PSAs relate stories about their own experience,” said Kathy Conde, a New Brunswick facilitator with 25 years of experience as a guidance counsellor and teacher, “because participants learn how others have overcome obstacles to pursue post-secondary education and reach for what they want.”

Work as a PSA is an intriguing blend of mentorship and peer support for Manitoba community college student Nicole Rieu: “I have a long history of bad decisions throughout my post-secondary studies,” said Rieu, a Manitoba PSA. “FTD gives me the chance to help participants by sharing what I had to learn the hard way.”

Facilitators and PSAs meet monthly with project participants outside of school hours, facilitating workshops that are carefully scripted for all three project interventions to ensure pedagogical consistency. Participants begin by exploring their interests, and then learn how they can combine their passions and competencies in the world of work.

FTD approaches career development from the individual student’s perspective. “Participants are quick to realize that the project is all about them,” said Pelletier. “It’s not about driving round students into the



interventions. Manitoba’s assignment is divided almost evenly between students with interventional support and a comparison group without.

While the project’s implementation report is due in 2007, the final report will not be available until 2012. In the meantime, Pelletier points to

square holes of the work world; it’s about spending a great deal of time learning who they are, what they want, and where they fit. This is very powerful for young people who are already caught up in a natural process of self-discovery.”

Measuring value

FTD is subject to rigorous evaluation that will deliver the first hard data on the effectiveness of various interventions. The evaluation will measure, for example, the extent to which the financial incentive in *Learning Accounts* encourages students to continue studies beyond high school.

“Without question, one of the most exciting things about FTD is its groundbreaking evaluation component,” said Yves Pelletier, manager of pilot projects for the Foundation. “As a result, we will emerge with the best evidence on the impact of career development in Canada.”

To support the evaluation, New Brunswick’s English and French FTD participants are divided into multiple cohorts. Some students receive only the Explore Your Horizons or Learning Accounts programming, while others participate in both interventions. Comparison groups are made up of students who receive no project

substantive short-term successes.

“FTD is not a project we could conduct in isolation, so the enthusiastic involvement of two provincial departments of education has been crucial,” observed Pelletier. “We’ve also gained the support of superintendents and principals at 51 participating high schools. “More importantly, I believe FTD’s high active participation rate indicates we’ve earned the trust of the 5,400 students in the program.”

For both Drystek and Layden-Oreto, one immediate measure of FTD’s impact is the positive response they’ve received from participants and their families. “Even some students who do not enjoy school are making it a point not to miss an FTD session,” said Layden-Oreto. “Parents are very glad that their children were randomly selected for the project, but many of them have told me FTD should be mandatory for all students.”

According to Drystek, parents anxious to interact meaningfully with their high-school age child—particularly over issues concerning education and career planning—find FTD’s Lasting Gifts program provides a welcome opportunity.

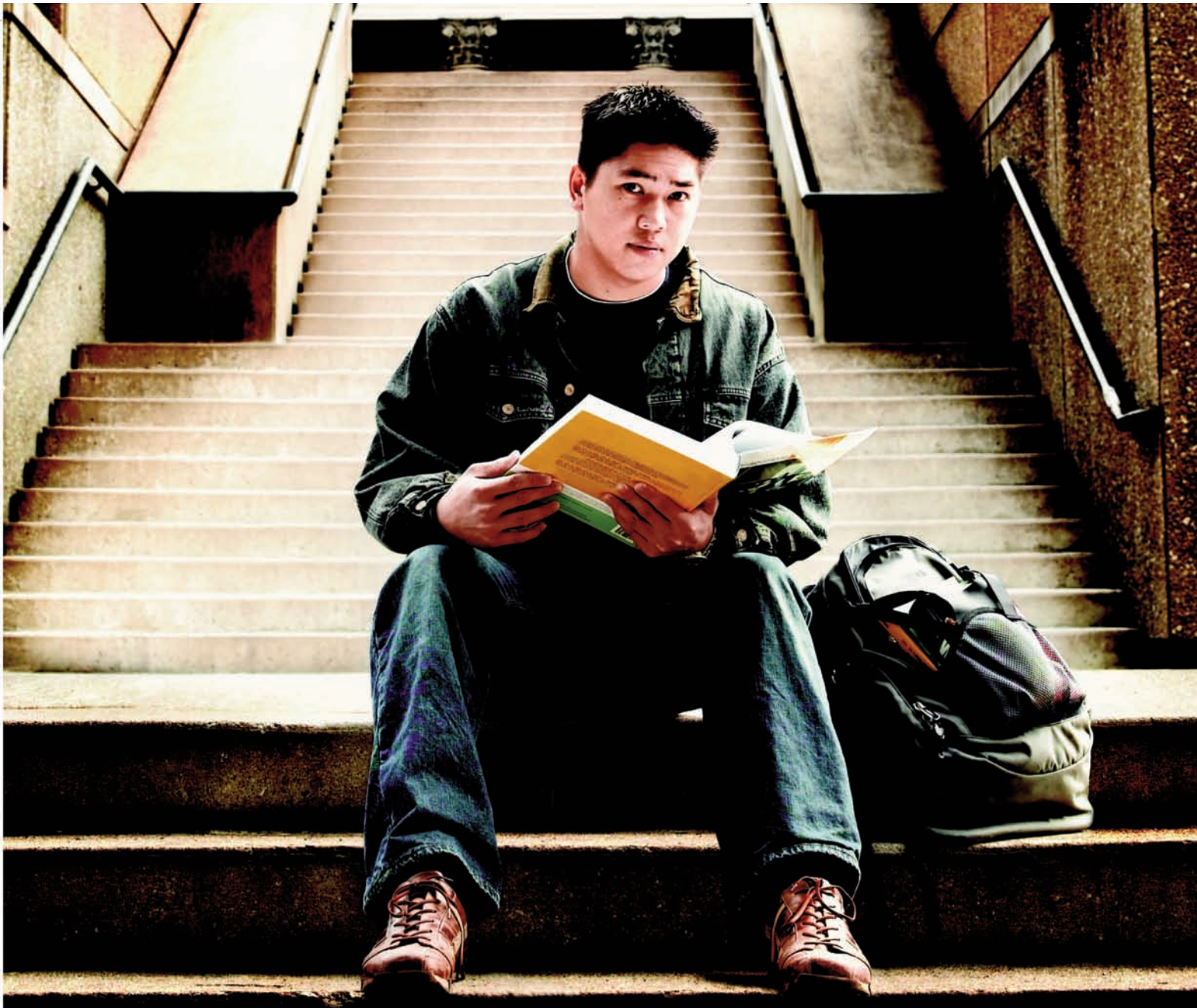
“Whether they know it or not,” said Drystek, “parents are the greatest influences in their children’s lives. By bringing parents and guardians together with students, Lasting Gifts provides a forum in which that influence can be most beneficial.”

“No matter what the outcome,” said Layden-Oreto, “I believe we will come away with clear indications of how we can improve to ensure the greatest impact.”

With an eye to the future, Pelletier and the Foundation are hopeful that the project will provide answers to two key questions: Does an enhanced career-development curriculum increase post-secondary enrolment and reduce attrition following the first year of post-secondary studies? And does the promise of money encourage high school students to continue into post-secondary studies?



“It’s difficult to predict what we’ll learn from FTD,” said Pelletier. “I hope it provides evidence that indicates clearly how provinces can spend education dollars to help the greatest number of students—and that the project’s various strategies will make a real difference in the lives of young people.”



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