



LEADERSHIP TIMES

*The newsletter of the Council on School Administration
of the Alberta Teachers' Association*

December 2006

President's Message

Johanna Kutanzi

Warm greetings to CSA members across the province! I sincerely hope that the first quarter of the school year has gone well and that you are optimistic about the remainder of the year. Before we know it, we will be into Christmas concert season, and the Christmas break will provide a nice break in the school routine.

I hope you were able to join us in October for the 45th Annual Western Canadian

Educational Administrators' Conference in Kananaskis. The theme of the conference, "Bringing Heart and Soul Back to School," certainly resonated with our conference delegates. Although accountability measures are never far from our thoughts, it is absolutely imperative that we never lose sight of all those things that generally go unmeasured. I believe the heart and soul of a school lie in the people within it. This conference was a fantastic reminder to realize and respond to what is truly important in education—our students, our staff and the school community. Many thanks and genuine appreciation are extended to our conference director, Lorianne Tenove, and her entire conference committee for a magnificent conference.

As CSA members, I hope you are taking advantage of CSA activities in your region. You can greatly influence the offerings of CSA, simply by indicating your needs and concerns. Would you like an issue-based session? Would you like an opportunity to speak with Alberta Education? What puzzles or concerns you? CSA is here to serve as an advocate for school administrators, and your input will allow us to fulfill that mandate. The best way to ensure that school principals and vice-principals have a voice in education is for us to simply be a little louder at times. Collectively we are a powerful voice and, perhaps, we have to learn how to use that voice better.

As we head into the Christmas season, I wish you, your families and your schools the very best of the season!

PS: For all who have known me as Johanna Juergensen, I recently married!

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Canadian Association of Principals Report

Johanna Kutanzi

Every Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) meeting presents the same dilemma of being away from school for several days. This time, though, the anxiety of time away from school was heightened, because I had already missed a few days of school for my wedding the weekend before the fall CAP meeting. Nonetheless, with my new husband, off I went to the meeting in Ottawa. The anxiety about missing school quickly dissipated as the CAP directors from across our country entered the meeting room. At that point, it was evident that we would be discussing Canadian public education and the time together could not have been spent on a better purpose.

The Canadian Association of Principals is an organization of 14 affiliates. As the president of the ATA Council on School Administration, I proudly represent Alberta school administrators at the national table. Most provincial and territorial affiliates represent school administration organizations that operate under the umbrella of the provincial teachers' association, but some operate independently. Regardless of structure, it is readily apparent that we are united in a tremendous commitment to public education and to best serving the needs of our students and teachers.

Highlights of the fall meeting of the Canadian Association of Principals included

- continued partnership with the Learning Partnership and the collection of nomination packages for the Canada's Outstanding Principal award.
- *CAP Journal*—every CSA member is also a member of CAP and should be receiving the *CAP Journal*. The upcoming winter

issue addresses the topic of Students at Risk. Upcoming issues are scheduled as follows: spring 2007—The Legislation of Education; fall 2007—School Centered Leadership; winter 2007—Succession and Sustainability; spring 2008—School Improvement Development. School administrators are invited to contribute content to each issue of *CAP Journal*. The *CAP Journal* seeks to inform and represent Canadian principals and vice-principals, and your contributions are critical and necessary to provide a pan-Canadian perspective.

- CAP offers four award programs: two awards honour administrators (a principal and a vice-principal award), one honours elementary schools and one honours student leadership. Please see the CAP website (www.cdnprincipals.org) for more details.
- CAP maintains an active partnership and representation with the following agencies: The National Association of Secondary Principals (US), the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, the RCMP National Youth Strategy, Health Canada—Be Drug Wise, the Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet) and the Canadian Initiative for the Prevention of Bullying (CIPB). Agencies are approaching CAP to ensure that they have the voice of school leaders at their table.
- CAP, as a political yet nonpartisan organization, also works with the Canadian Council on Learning and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada.

Plans for the annual CAP conference are progressing very well. CAP 2007 will be in Vancouver, BC, April 11–14. The theme of the conference is “Connecting Leaders.” A conference guide, with direct links to conference and hotel registrations, can be downloaded from www.bcpvpa.bc.ca.

The Manitoba Council of School Leaders is hosting a conference titled “Safe and Healthy Learning Communities” on February 8 and 9,

2007, in Winnipeg. Featured speakers include Michele Borba and Kevin Cameron. Look for more information at www.bowering.com.

The most interesting part of any CAP meeting is not reviewing the finances or the handbook—it is listening to what is happening

across the country. Despite our vast geography, our challenges and successes are very similar. However, particularly after this meeting, I feel that education in Alberta is doing well. Our challenges are reasonable and our successes emphasize learning.

Highlights of the ATACSA Report to CAP, October 31, 2006

CAP issues

- How to submit only four nomination packages for the Canada's Outstanding Principals Awards. As an executive, we are scattered throughout the province and our annual fall meeting is about two weeks before the nomination deadline. Although we could share most of the information by e-mail or fax, and then compare individual decisions, it would not be the same as a collective decision. So, this year I will be submitting six nomination packages to the National Selection Committee.

Regional Affiliate issues

- Our membership is dwindling.
- As a council, we need to evolve to be more than a PD-providing council. School administrators want to have a bigger voice in education.

Department of Education issues

- There has still been no decision on whether school-based administrators are to be removed from the Alberta Teachers' Association.
- Administrators are frustrated that communication with the Department of Education is limited.

Educational issues

- There are conflicting opinions concerning newer initiatives such as reporting of grade level achievement and computer adaptive assessment.

Professional Development

- ATACSA has just hosted the 45th Annual Western Canadian Educational Administrators' Conference in Kananaskis, October 18–21, 2006. It was a great conference.
- The Banff Leadership Seminar, also an annual event, is scheduled for March 18–20, 2007. The theme is "Teaching for Tomorrow"; Ian Jukes will be the keynote speaker.
- Our eight regionals are all planning professional development on a local level for their members.

News from the Regionals

Central Alberta Regional

Carol Johnson

The Central Alberta Regional held four meetings during the 2005/06 term, the highlights of which are listed below.

- On September 26, 2005, we met over dinner in Red Deer. We planned and set dates for our year's activities, and we welcomed new members and encouraged them to get involved.
- On December 2 we had a luncheon meeting, with the Honourable Gene Zwozdesky as our guest speaker. He addressed certain points from the report of Alberta's Commission on Learning. He also spoke about his role as Minister of Education and addressed many questions from the floor. As well, we conducted our 2005/06 elections.
- On January 24, 2006, the executive held a supper meeting. We gave each of the presidents the information sent to us from CSA, and requested them to take it back to their regions and share it with their administrators.
- Our final meeting took place on June 13, again over dinner. We reviewed the year and started planning for the upcoming term. The goal for the CARCSA fall activity was to connect with the Leading and Learning Conference in Red Deer on November 30, with a preconference session by Cassandra Erkens on meaningful quality assessment.

CARCSA held its spring event on May 29 at Sylvan Lake Golf Course. We started with a luncheon; the highlight of the event was presentation of the Distinguished Leadership Awards. Following the awards ceremony, many members completed the day with a round of golf.

This year, at our final meeting in June, we said good-bye to Wayne Hampton, who was retiring. We thanked him for his dedication to CARCSA and for the valuable contributions he has made to the Association and to education.

Greater Edmonton Regional

James Fraser

This year the Greater Edmonton Regional executive has chosen to focus on long-term direction for our PD and professional service priorities as school administrators. We are surveying administrators in our 14 member jurisdictions to find out what services they feel are most crucial for the regional and provincial executives of CSA to provide. The two specific areas on which we are seeking feedback are professional development and advocacy for administrator issues. Our target date for collection of the results is our mid-November executive meeting. The executive will analyze the results and communicate the findings of the regional survey to provincial CSA and to SAICC, the standing committee of PEC regarding the issues and concerns of administrators.

In addition to the analysis of survey results, we hope to offer two PD sessions to Edmonton-area administrators over the coming few months. We are planning a session on the theme of Administrative Courage, for late November or early December. We hope to develop a second session over the winter months that will have groups of administrators focus on developing strategies for addressing our survey results. The GERCSA executive will consider the issue of advocacy for administrators, within the context of our ATA specialist council model. We will then develop an action plan for advocacy of administrator issues as they relate to educational policy at the provincial level.

Additional goals for the GERCSA executive this year are to have a nominee

for each of the two categories of Administrator of the Year, and for each executive member to encourage one newly appointed administrator in their district to join the CSA.

We welcomed Konni DeGoeij, our new Member Services officer for Administrator Assistance, to our GERCSA September executive meeting. We spoke of the need for a process to identify priority areas for administrator representation within the ATA. Thank you to Konni for bringing her supportive and forthright approach to focus our executive on the need for process and data collection from the field, so that all the issues can be clearly and effectively represented at the executive level.

GERCSA endorsed the November 21 session, "Detecting Truth," by Dr John Yuille of UBC, about interviewing children, and supported all area administrators who wanted to attend this worthwhile session. Our next regional session will likely be an informative and interactive evening in January or February to discuss the results of our issues and concerns survey. We will advertise for provincewide participation at this Edmonton regional event.

The GERCSA executive exists, in large part, to provide a meeting place for collaborative educational feedback between school-based administrators. Through collegial dialogue, we hope to nurture stronger advocacy of administrator issues with the educational policy-makers of the province.

Call for Nominations

Enclosed with this edition of *Leadership Times* is a nomination form for the position of Treasurer, which, by the constitution of the Council on School Administration, is open for election this year.

The Treasurer shall

- 1) be responsible for directing an ongoing program to encourage membership in the council;
- 2) be responsible for the proper handling and accounting of all funds of the council and its committees;
- 3) prepare a budget, in consultation with other executive members, for consideration of the executive, provide interim membership and financial statements for each executive committee meeting, and prepare the audited financial statement of the annual operation for presentation to the annual general meeting;
- 4) scrutinize and pay all accounts and make necessary disbursements of funds as authorized by the executive;
- 5) maintain liaison with the staff of the ATA to facilitate the administration of membership fees, subscriptions and the Association grant;
- 6) require an acceptable financial statement from the treasurers of each conference or committee operation which receives or disburses funds on behalf of the council.

Any regular member of the CSA may be nominated for a vacant office. If you are interested in serving, or know of someone who would be interested, please complete the enclosed form and send it to the president-elect, Kathleen Murphy-House, by February 15, 2007.

The Learning Partnership

**Carol Johnson, Principal,
Innisfail Middle School**

The Leadership Program for Canada's Outstanding Principals

For five days in February, I was engaged in a stimulating leadership training program at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management with leaders from the education, business, social and cultural communities across Canada.

Our program leaders and presenters modelled all that they taught us, reinforcing the value of modelling what is important. The leaders were present, well organized, personable, knowledgeable and passionate about what they were doing. Now that I am back in my own environment, I keep in mind the value of modelling what we, as staff, have identified as important.

Leaders such as Mihnea Moldoveanu, Michael Fullan, Joe D'Cruz, Milton Wong and Alan MacGibbon challenged us to

- create collegial, flexible work environments that encourage collaboration,

- awaken the desire to learn,
- think about integrative thinking and its impact on the workplace,
- see the correlation between quality of leadership and the quality of learning in a school,
- understand the theory of change management and
- understand ourselves so that we can work more effectively with others.

This has been the most powerful learning experience I have had in my career as an administrator. I eagerly attended each session. Frequently, I would think about my school and apply what I was learning to it. I wrote many notes to remind myself of what I planned to do when I returned home. I thought about sustainability and how important it is. I saw the power in building the leadership of the people at Innisfail Middle School. I saw how the Learning Partnership set this up for us by rewarding, honouring, mentoring and challenging us to do our best. We were given models, encouraged to use process, given an opportunity to take a deeper look at ourselves so that we can be more effective, and challenged by successful leaders.

I left the program a richer person. My wealth will only increase if I continue to connect with others and share what I have learned.

WCEAC 2006 Keynote Address: Doon Wilkins

Resiliency: The Courageous Choice!

**Brenda Beck, Principal,
Magrath Elementary School**

Doon Wilkins is, in his own words, on a mission “to uplift the human spirit through speech, music, humour and learning.” He reminded us that if we want to keep the heart and soul in our lives and the lives of those in our schools, we have to *L.A.U.G.H.* Wilkins sang, told stories, and talked us through the acronym. *L* is to remind us to *live with intention*; we need to consider a clear goal and keep it in front of us each day by having a daily focus word and by reflective journal writing at the end of the day. *A* is to remind us to *acknowledge imperfection*. *U* highlights the importance of continuing on the journey of being a *unique life-long learner*. *G* cues us to *gauge stress*; his challenge to us is to consider the level of stress that a life event might cause us, and to gauge whether or not our emotional response is appropriate for that event. He suggested that on a one-to-nine scale of stressful life events, it is the threes that can cause us the most damage over time. *H* reminds us of the power of our *heart* and our *humour*. He challenged us to ask, “Who do you love? What difference did you make? When did you laugh?”

Doon Wilkins lives in Canmore, Alberta, and can be reached at dooninc@shaw.ca or www.doon.bz. His book *Stumbling Toward Enlightenment: A Pathway to Better* is a gem. Both his speaking and writing fit his mission to uplift the human spirit.

WCEAC 2006 Keynote Address: David Irvine

Authentic Leadership— Heart and Soul Back to School

James Fraser

David Irvine presented his session as one of affirmation for those administrators who have made the choice to become educational leaders, and who relish the challenges that this vocation brings. The heart of success in this role is in remaining “authentic” to the calling of working with people in educational decision-making each day. Irvine affirms that we can discover our authentic self through this service. Many in attendance purchased his book *Authentic Leadership*, in which he details how we can transform ourselves from being simply transactional leaders to transformational leaders.

Julius Buski Leadership Grant

The Julius Buski Leadership Grant recognizes projects and practices that have contributed to the enhancement of teaching and learning within a school. An individual teacher or a group of teachers may be nominated for this leadership grant. Nominated initiatives must have been in place for a minimum of one calendar year and must show evidence of benefiting teaching and learning.

The Julius Buski Leadership Grant will be awarded annually, unless there is no suitable applicant. The school that receives this grant will be awarded a \$500 grant in support of the initiative and will be formally recognized during the Western Canada Educational Administrators' Conference (WCEAC).

Applications must include the names and signatures of the school's principal or assistant principal(s) and one teacher on staff who has worked directly with or has knowledge of the project.

Criteria

Applicants are required to

- be current members of the ATA. The principal or assistant principal(s) must be current member(s) of the CSA;
- provide a one-page write-up describing the school and the project and/or practice, including specific examples of how teaching and learning have been enhanced because of the project. Dates when the project and/or practice was implemented and reasons for implementation should also be included;
- be available for a brief interview (in person or by telephone), during which a member of the selection committee will ask questions concerning the innovation. An interview schedule will be developed; and

- be willing to make a one-hour presentation on the initiative to colleagues at the WCEAC following the awarding of the grant. Any reasonable costs associated with this presentation (including transportation to and from the conference and one night's hotel accommodation if necessary) will be covered by the WCEAC program planning committee.

The selection committee for the Julius Buski Leadership Grant will include the CSA president-elect and WCEAC directors. The deadline for application is February 15, 2007.

Distinguished Leadership Award

The Distinguished Leadership Award recognizes administrators for the outstanding work they are doing in their schools. Each regional will select one nominee and forward the nomination to the CSA secretary. A committee comprising the CSA secretary, the CSA president and the ATA staff advisor will review the nominees and, based on the information given, select the winner of the Distinguished Leadership Award.

The winner will receive a beautifully framed certificate at a CSA function. CSA will cover any expenses related to the presentation of this award.

Contact your regional president if you would like to nominate someone in your area. The nomination deadlines may vary between regionals, but the submission deadline for nominations from the regionals to the CSA secretary is **March 1, 2007**.

Outstanding work is being done in our schools every day. Take the time to recognize those doing that work by nominating them for this award.

School Councils Are Invaluable

Andra McGinn, PhD, Educational Services Superintendent, Area C, Calgary Catholic School District

Much educational literature about successful school communities emphasizes the potential role of the individual and collective parent voice. McBride and Shields (1997) talk about this era of increased democratization and the need for parents to have a direct influence on the profile of education in our schools. Fullan (1997, 2000, 2001, 2003) emphasizes the need for successful school leaders to work effectively with parent stakeholders. Both Sergiovanni (2000) and Devereux (2000) focus on the need for school leaders to build communities where all stakeholders are able to make a difference. Indeed, if school districts and school communities are truly committed to continuous improvement, parent stakeholders must have a valid voice (Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline, 2004). A key vehicle for ensuring that parents play an integral role in school districts and school communities is school councils.

In 1995, the government of Alberta officially recognized the role of school councils in the province's schools. Calgary Catholic School District, however, has operated with school councils since 1972. Over the years, the role of school councils has evolved in the Calgary Catholic School District and in its individual school communities. At a recent board meeting, Dr Jeremy Simms, the Chief Superintendent of Calgary Catholic School District, indicated the need for appropriate structures to sustain the role of school councils: "Our district has always been committed to ensuring that evolving structures are in place to support school councils' effectiveness in our district and schools." This evolution has reflected the significant potential of parents to play a role

not only in their children's education, but also in the culture of their school community and in the direction of their school district.

Over the last few years, Alberta Education's focus on the effective role of school councils has highlighted the need to ensure that school councils function with a specific structure and mandate. Certainly, the *School Act* is clear that school councils may "advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school" (s22). However, the spirit of how school councils operate in our school communities is much greater than the letter of the *School Act*. School councils have the potential to strengthen every aspect of a school's culture. If this potential is to be realized, though, it is necessary to have a structure that supports the role of school councils. This must be the responsibility of the district level. Such a structure should provide an avenue for school councils to have a beneficial impact not only at the local level, but also more globally, within and beyond the district.

Calgary Catholic School District aims to provide school councils with a structure that empowers school councils at the school and district level. In a district of over 44,000 students and 98 schools, the board of trustees determined that, when dealing with such a large number of school communities, it was necessary to provide opportunities for school council chairs and principals to meet in large and small groups. For this reason, six Families of School Councils were established. The makeup of each family is determined by geographical location and is guided by the collection of schools that feed into the same high school. Each family meets three times a year. School council chairs, trustees, a district administrator, and principals attend the meetings. Agendas for the meetings are established from feedback submitted by school council chairs and principals. The family meetings are opportunities to share best practice, broaden knowledge and understanding, and exercise mutual influence. Topics discussed at these meetings include budget process, curriculum, district decision-making and advocating for

education. The formally gathered feedback from participants in these meetings has indicated a high level of satisfaction with the content and process of the meetings. "Discussions in these meetings have influenced the direction of Calgary Catholic School District and they have greatly contributed to the district's operations," said Cathie Williams, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Calgary Catholic School District.

In addition, Calgary Catholic School District established a District Advisory Council (DAC). This group consists of 18 school council chairs who represent a diagonal slice of the entire district. The aim is to have a small group of parents who come from school communities representing different grade levels and geographical areas. This group also meets three times a year. In addition to the 18 school council chairs, all members of the board of trustees, the chief superintendent, some members of senior administration, and the chairs of the three principals' councils attend these meetings. The agendas for these meetings are also built from feedback submitted by the DAC members. These meetings have played an invaluable role in the district's decision-making process. Like the Family of Schools meetings, DAC meetings have provided exciting opportunities to discuss new initiatives, problem solve and share best practice. Feedback from a school council chair indicated: "These meetings are a great opportunity to know more and to be able to make a difference in our schools." There is no question that the DAC has supported the district's governance model and made a significant contribution to the operation of Calgary Catholic School District.

The opportunity for school council chairs to meet in small groups is essential for a district the size of Calgary Catholic. The board of trustees, however, also recognized the need to provide an opportunity for all school council chairs to meet together. For this reason, all schools participate in an annual school council orientation. In this way, newly appointed school council chairs have an

opportunity to receive information to support them in their roles and to exchange ideas and share information.

As with any structure, it is important that there be opportunities to reframe and evolve (Senge et al 1999). The dynamic in school districts and school communities is not static and neither should the structures that support our schools be static. For this reason, it is important that the structures that support our school councils evolve to meet the changing needs of a district and school communities. In the last five years, Calgary Catholic School District has witnessed an evolution in the format and process of both the Family of Schools and District Advisory Council. Our information age is reflected in the growing knowledge that parents have about education and an increased sharing of parental expectations (Schlechty 2001). Meetings reflect this and have evolved from presentations to sharing best practices. Instead of following rigidly a preset agenda, meetings reflect the needs of specific circumstances. An example was the need for parents to advocate for public education in a particular political climate. So too, the format of the meetings has evolved to reflect feedback received from participants requesting more time for group discussion.

Certainly, over the last five years, there are also trends that can be identified in the work of Calgary Catholic School District's Family of Schools School Councils and the District Advisory Council. In all meetings, the focus on student success has been paramount. All meetings have included discussion and reference to the important role that school culture plays in the success of students. Another commonality of all meetings over the last five years has been the commitment of parents to contribute to the effectiveness of the district as well as their local school community.

As Calgary Catholic School District plans for the future, the board of trustees continues to be committed to supporting the role of school councils in our district. This commitment recognizes the need to allow structures to evolve. Part of this evolution includes operating in

the future with a planning committee. This committee involves three DAC members, three trustees and a senior administrator. The aim of this committee is to use feedback from school councils to advise the board of trustees regarding the preferred agenda and format for the family of schools and district advisory council. So too, the board of trustees is committed to expanding the communication process with all stakeholders and with school councils in particular. There is no question that effective structures that support strong relationships contribute to effective schools. Ensuring that school councils are able to function within an effective structure contributes much to school districts' journey towards achieving more effective schools.

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Council on School Administration (CSA)

The CSA advocates for school administrators and speaks on behalf of children through the Alberta Teachers' Association.

The CSA supports the professional development of its members through the creation and delivery of a variety of events and activities. A special program acknowledging contributions to the field of educational administration recognizes and rewards excellence among members at both the local and provincial levels. CSA develops and maintains national and international links with other school administrator organizations. In addition, the CSA promotes lifelong learning and strives to maintain and foster close relationships with the colleges and universities of Alberta. To foster knowledge and professionalism in the field of educational administration, the CSA encourages and supports both theoretical and practical research.

The annual WCEAC conference provides an excellent opportunity for networking and communication among members.



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