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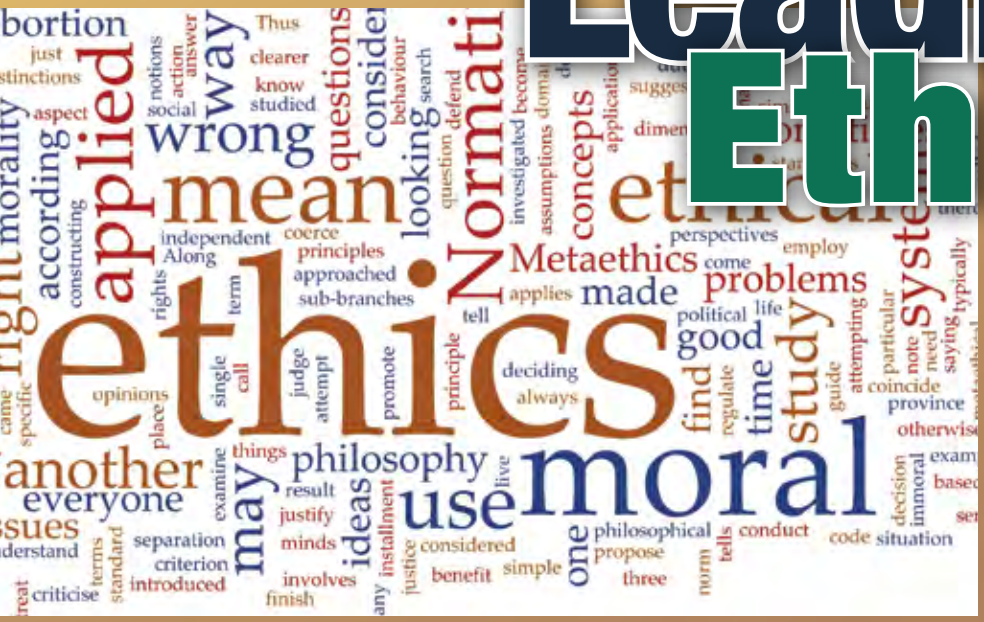
Leading Ethically



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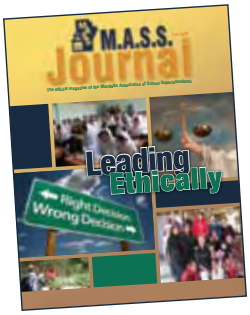

On the Cover:

MASS President Sandra Herbst states in her message on page 7, "At the very heart of ethical leadership is the notion of doing the right work. The right work is often not easy to do. It frequently flies in the face of popularly held opinions and a course of uncomplicated action. Nevertheless, the underpinnings of a public education system are dependent on such a stance." This issue of The MASS Journal includes articles that speak to how divisions can and are "doing the right work" as they strive to advance Manitoba's education system. Their ideas and actions are forward-thinking and innovative. We hope you discover just what's possible by reading their stories.

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A Message from the President

Sandra Herbst
Assistant Superintendent
River East Transcona School Division

Robert J. Starratt begins his book, Ethical Leadership (2004), by stating that educational leaders and systems are being challenged as never before. Demographic changes, decreasing resources, and issues related to accountability, technology, partnerships, inclusion, relevancy and shifting curricula demand our leaders' time and attention. He continues by saying that "the work of educational leadership should be work that is simultaneously intellectual and moral; an activity characterized by a blend of human, professional and civic concerns; a work of cultivating an environment for learning that is humanly fulfilling and socially responsible (p.3)."

The challenges that Starratt references throughout his text are the very ones that are reflected in the dialogue among MASS members. Whether at the Executive table, at regional meetings, during professional learning opportunities or in casual conversation, discussion centres around decisions and dilemmas to which there are no easy answers or actions. Regardless of the issues, however, it is striking that within the structure and culture of MASS, there is space and trust that not only allows for but encourages these conversations to take place. As Margaret Wheatley's aptly titled book contends, we are "turning to one another" to figure things out.

The Ethical Leadership cohorts have become such a place—a place where members "turn to each other" to learn, to consider the research and writing of experts in this field, and to engage in open and honest communication about situations that are ethically "sticky." Based on a model developed by the superintendents association in Iowa (SAI), MASS has adapted a framework of professional development to meet the emergent needs of the participants. As Coralie Bryant's research about the Ethical Leadership Cohort demonstrates, it has resoundingly met those needs. As one participant declared, "this is the best learning experience I've had since my Master's program."

What supports our work in this area is human conversation and, as Margaret Wheatley asserts, that is "the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change—personal change, community and organizational change, planetary change. If we can sit together and talk about what's important to us, we begin to come alive. We share what we see, what we feel and we listen to what others see and feel (p.7)."

The MASS journal is an extension of our conversations with one another. It is a chance to listen to what members and those who are friends of our organization are saying about leading ethically. In this edition, we welcome the voices of those people we know well—Anne Longston, Carolyn Duhamel, Lydia Hedrich, Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Dr. Jon Young and Coralie Bryant—and those whose work is becoming more familiar to us—Dr. Robert Starratt and Dr. Christina McDonald. As they share their perspectives, our own understanding is enhanced.

As I watch my niece and nephew interact with family and friends, I am always struck by the way that they copy what they see and hear. When three year old Kara begins her sentences with the word "actually," I hear my mother and her turn of phrase. When seven year old Colin gives his sister a hug as she is crying, I see my sister's care for her children. For me, this has a strong connection to our sustained dialogue around ethical leadership. It is in the modeling and making public of our conversations—the considerations, the realities, the dissonance—that our communities and those with whom we work will better understand the ethic of deep caring that lies beneath our leadership. Through this, we may impact upon their thinking, actions and decision making.

At the very heart of ethical leadership is the notion of doing the right work. The right work is often not easy to do. It frequently flies in the face of popularly held opinions and a course of uncomplicated action. Nevertheless, the underpinnings of a public education system are dependent on such a stance. As we wrap our students, our families and our staff in support in order that they can participate fully and meaningfully in the life of their school, community and work, we need to ensure that we are doing the same for ourselves. Our conversations with one another do just that—whether formal or informal, structured or unstructured.

Our students and communities require us to be ethically courageous. From time to time, this stance may make us feel alone and vulnerable. However, something that I have come to understand over the past several years is that there is a network of support in the MASS membership. I encourage you to participate in our community of learners and practice—to engage in meaningful conversations, to extend your own learning and to be, as Starratt states, each others' "supply closets."

As we think about our work through the lens of ethical leadership, we are invited by Starratt "to transform each day into something special, something wonderful, something unforgettable, something that enables the human spirit to soar" (p. 145). I trust that your work leaves you with this indelible feeling.

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Building an Ethical School System: Ethical Challenges for Superintendents

"It has become increasingly evident that schools and school systems are structurally ineffective in serving all students and their parents fairly."

By Robert J. Starratt

It is important to bring ethical inquiry much closer to the workplace of educational administrators, especially superintendents, to offer a multidimensional construct that offers practicing administrators a way to think about their work and their workplace from ethical perspectives. What is suggested here, in brief, is the synthesis of three ethics: the ethic of critique, the ethic of justice, and the ethic of caring.

None of these ethics by itself offers an educational administrator a fully adequate framework for making ethical judgments; together, however, each ethic complements the others in a context of practice. Because none of these ethics compels choice in every instance, one perfect choice does not exist; the three perspectives, however, enable one to make ethical choices with the issues more clearly delineated, to move toward the better choice under the circumstances.

The Ethics of Educational Administration: Administering an Ethical School System

The ethics of educational administration being advanced here differs from that offered by scholars such as Kimbrough (1985) or Strike et al. (1988). They tend to focus on individual ethical choices of administrators regarding how to deal with individual persons or with individual situations. My position is that the much larger ethical task of educational administrators is to establish an ethical environment throughout the school system in which all the work of education can take place ethically.

Individual choices regarding individual circumstances are seen as taking place in this larger ethical context. The educational program housed in that is assumed to serve moral purposes (the nurturing of the personal, social, cultural and intellectual growth of the youngsters). Thus, the educational environment, its organizational arrangements such as the curriculum for each grade, the daily and weekly schedule, as well as the student assessment and discipline policies do not enjoy a value neutrality.

The elements essential to educating the young give administrative choices a different finality than choices made, for

example, by hospital administrators or corporate managers. Educational administrators have a moral responsibility to be proactive about creating an ethical environment *for the conduct of education.* They will no doubt be faced with individual ethical choices about whether to fire a custodian for loaning out school equipment to a relative, or whether to accept a gratuity from a parent who wants her son to make the basketball team, but such individual choices are a small part of the large agenda of building an ethical school system. From this vantage point, then, the educational administrator faces the difficult question: How is he or she to conceptualize the ethical task? This is where the ethical inquiry of this article begins.

The ethic of critique

Whether one begins from the perspective of proponents of school reform, such as Boyer (1983), Goodlad (1984), Holland, 2004; Larson & Murtadha (2002), Oakes et al. (2000), or Sizer (1984), or from the deeper critique of Freire (1970), Apple (1982), or Giroux (1988), it has become increasingly evident that schools and school systems are structurally ineffective in serving all students and their parents fairly.

An ethic of educational administration, therefore, appropriately begins with the theme of critique, a critique aimed at the system's institutional structures and its bureaucratic mind-set. As the school community faces the possibility of creating an ethical school, it will also face the necessity of critiquing both the adversarial mind-set of both the unions and the school authorities, as well as the hierarchically structured, impersonality of the administration of the school system. Beyond that critique awaits the critique of the overly (if not exclusively) technicist approach to teaching and learning tied to narrowly conceived learning outcomes and simplistic, quantifiable measures of learning.

The ethic of critique looks at the way schools are run and asks: "Who benefits by these arrangements?" "Which group dominates this social arrangement?" "Who defines the way things are structured here?" "Who defines what is valued and devalued in this situation?" The point of this critical stance is to uncover which groups are privileged and which disadvantaged by the way schools are structured and governed.

The ethic of critique looks at the way schools are run and asks: "Who benefits by these arrangements?" "Which group dominates this social arrangement?" "Who defines the way things are structured here?" "Who defines what is valued and devalued in this situation?" The point of this critical stance is to uncover which groups are privileged and which disadvantaged by the way schools are structured and governed.

The ethic of critique uncovers inherent injustice imbedded in the language and structures of the school system and suggests ways to redress such injustice. Examples of issues confronted by critical ethics include (a) sexist language and sexual discrimination; (b) racial bias in educational arrangements; (c) the preservation of powerful groups' hegemony over the governance of the school system; (d) the rationalization and legitimation of institutional practices that hinder an authentic teaching and learning process.

This ethical perspective provides a framework for enabling educational administrators to move from a kind of naiveté about "the way things are" to an awareness that aspects of the school system reflect arrangements of power and privilege, interest and influence, often legitimized by an assumed rationality and by law and custom. From a critical perspective, no organizational arrangements in schools "have to be" that way.

Where unjust arrangements reflect school board or state policy, they can be appealed and restructured. When an educational administrator confronts the systemic structural issues such as the process of teacher evaluation, homogeneous tracking systems, the process of grading on a curve, the absence of important topics in textbooks, the lack of adequate due process for students, the labelling criteria for naming some children gifted and others handicapped, the daily interruptions of the teaching-learning process by uniform time allotments for class periods, he or she discovers ethical burdens to all of them because they contain unjustifiable assumptions and impose a disproportionate advantage to some at the expense of others. The ethic of critique, therefore, poses the fundamental ethical challenge to the educational administrator: how to construct an environment in which education can take place ethically.

The ethic of justice

One of the shortcomings of the ethic of critique is that it rarely offers a blueprint for reconstructing the social order it is criticizing. The problem for the educational administrator is one of governance. How do we govern ourselves while carrying out educating activities? The ethic of critique illuminates unethical practices in governing and managing organizations and implies in its critique some ethical values such as equality, the common good, human and civil rights, democratic participation, and the like. An ethic of justice provides a more explicit response to the question: we govern ourselves by observing justice. That is to say, we treat each other according to some standard of justice that is uniformly applied to all our relationships.

In a school system that takes site-based management seriously, justice issues in the day-to-day governance of school life are inescapable. The ethic of justice demands that the claims of the institution serve both the common good and the rights of the individuals in the school. Ongoing discussions of student discipline policies, of faculty and student due-process procedures, of agreements about faculty time commitments, and of students' genuine opportunities to learn material they are graded on are absolutely necessary. Approaches to multicultural

education should include not only the standard attempts to create better understanding of cultural differences, but also, and most important, discussions of historical and present social conditions that breed unjust relationships between people of different cultures and explorations of ways to alter those social conditions.

Even this brief dusting off of the school's involvement in promoting an ethic of justice points to the close relationship of the ethic of critique and the ethic of justice. To promote a just social order in the school, the school community must carry out an outgoing critique of those structural features of the school that work against human beings. Often the naming of the problem (critique) will suggest new directions or alternatives for restructuring the practice or process in a fairer manner.

The ethic of care

Discussions of what is just in any given situation can tend to become mired down in minimalist considerations (what minimal conditions must be met to fulfill the claims of justice?). For an ethic of justice to serve its more generous purpose, it must be complemented by an ethic of care. Such an ethic focuses on the demands of relationships among persons, not from a contractual or legalistic standpoint, but from a standpoint of absolute regard. This ethic places the human persons-in-relationship as occupying a position for each other of absolute value; neither one can be used as a means to an end; each enjoys an intrinsic dignity and worth. Educational administrators committed to an ethic of caring should hold the good of human beings as sacred. This ethic reaches beyond concerns with efficiency, which can easily lead to using human beings as merely the means to some larger purpose of productivity, such as an increase in the district's average scores on standardized tests.

Summary

One can argue that the interpenetration of each ethic by the other two is required for a fully developed moral person and a fully developed human society. Even a superficial familiarity with the themes, which this essay attempts to communicate, suggests that each theme implies something of the other theme. The ethic of critique assumes a point of view about social justice and human rights and about the way communities ought to govern themselves. The ethic of justice assumes an ability to perceive injustice in the social order as well as some minimal level of caring about relationships in that social order. The ethic of caring does not ignore the demands of community governance issues, but claims that caring is the ideal fulfillment of all social relationships, even though most relationships among members of a community function according to a more remote form of caring.

Moreover, each ethic needs the very strong convictions embedded in the other. The ethic of justice needs the profound commitment to the dignity of the individual person found in the ethic of caring. The ethic of caring needs the larger attention to social order and fairness

of the ethic of justice if it is to avoid an entirely idiosyncratic involvement in social policy. The ethic of critique requires an ethic of caring if it is to avoid the cynical complaints of the habitual malcontent, and the ethic of justice requires the profound social analysis of the ethic of critique, to move beyond the naïve fine tuning of social arrangements in a social system with inequities built into the very structures by which justice is supposed to be measured.

An educational administrator's day is filled with ethical situations and challenges. Sometimes those situations clearly call for a critique of unfair school practices, sometimes for a compassionate understanding of students' compulsive or stupid behaviour, sometimes for a weighing of competing claims between an individual's rights and community priorities. More complex ethical dilemmas call for a careful blending of all three ethics. In administrative practice an ethical consciousness that is not interpenetrated by each theme can be captured either by sentimentality, by rationalistic simplification, or by social naiveté. Attention to each theme encourages a rich human response to the many uncertain ethical situations administrators face every day in their work. ■

Robert J. Starratt, known to his friends as Jerry, is a professor of Educational Administration at Boston College. He worked with the MASS Ethical Leadership cohort this past February. A shorter version of this article appears as a column in this fall's issue of Education Canada.

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School Boards Work: Leadership that Makes a Difference

By Carolyn Duhamel

Across Manitoba, public school boards wrestle every day with problems and situations which put their leadership to the test….The initiatives described in this article are evidence of the creative and varied responses of Manitoba public school divisions to this myriad of challenges and needs across the province and testament to ethical leadership in action at the local school board level.

Corporate and political scandals of the past two decades have engendered wide-spread cynicism in the public arena about the motivations and competencies of business leaders and public officials alike. In this context, school boards charged with the provision of educational programs and services for large numbers of young people and responsible for the expenditure of huge public dollars have been easy targets for the sceptics and the critics who advocate their demise. More than ever school boards as elected public officials and local government authorities must be and be seen to be models of ethical leadership which add value to public education systems in their respective communities.

This critical imperative for ethical school board leadership has typically taken the form of policy requirements and guidelines which focus on legal obligations of school boards and codes of conduct and procedural rules to be followed by trustees. Ethical school board leadership, however, is more than staying on the right side of the law, minimal compliance with the "rules" or passive oversight of divisional directions and operations. Rather, it is about inclusion and an unwavering commitment to fairness and equity for all students. It is about responsibility and a willingness to take ownership of issues and challenges as well as outcomes, however positive or negative they may be. It is about relationship building and meaningful collaboration with fellow board members, staff, students, parents and community. It is about the ability to reflect deeply and to consider critically both the successes and failures in our schools. It is about transparency and the courage to make hard choices for the right reasons in the most difficult and trying of circumstances and to stand accountable for those choices.

Across Manitoba, public school boards wrestle every day with problems and situations which put their leadership to the test—increasingly diverse student populations and learning needs, shifting provincial education policies and requirements, competing public perspectives about priorities and essential learnings for students, social and economic changes affecting students and families and increasing program/service expectations coupled with resource limitations. The initiatives described in this article are evidence of the creative and varied responses of Manitoba public school divisions to this myriad of challenges and needs across the province and testament to ethical leadership in action at the local school board level.

Mitigating the impacts of poverty on learning

The negative impacts of child and family poverty on success in school are widely known and well documented. Understanding this, the **Seven Oaks School Division** Board of Trustees has examined divisional policies and practices through the lens of poverty and implemented several measures to address systemic challenges faced by economically challenged students and families within the division. Initiatives approved by the school board in recent years include:

- Elimination of student fees related to meeting the requirements of the provincial curriculum, i.e. agendas, field trips, activities fees, etc.;
- School-based purchase and management of basic school supplies to reduce costs to students;
- Lunch supervision at no charge to parents;

LEFT AND BELOW: *Students at Springfield Collegiate—part of the Sunrise School Division—participate in an aboriginal awareness program called Gakina Awiya Biindigeg. Here they are building a Metis Ox Cart.*

RIGHT AND BELOW: *These photos were taken at the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre in Morden, during the career technology program.*

- Free summer programming for English as an Additional Language students;
- No charge universal pre-school language, literacy and parenting programs;
- Breakfast programs;
- Sports camps and summer enrichment programs for vulnerable students; and
- Full credit tuition-free university level programs for eligible high school students.

The school board also maintains a highly visible and vocal advocacy role in the public arena on issues of social and economic policy which impact the well-being of children and families in the province.

Aboriginal student success

For Manitoba's aboriginal communities, the low levels of school success experienced by aboriginal youth compared to their non-aboriginal counterparts are both alarming and appalling. Cognisant of this reality and mindful of its responsibility for the academic success of growing numbers of Métis and First Nations students attending divisional schools, the Board of the **Sunrise School Division** undertook to develop and to implement a division wide professional learning model which uses Indigenous perspectives and culture to inform teaching and learning in all its schools.

In the first phase of the model, team leaders—one from each school—attended a week long off-site session where they worked closely with Elders and other traditional teachers and were immersed in traditional forms of Indigenous education. Elements of spirituality and ceremony so integral to Indigenous cultures were significant aspects of this experiential learning phase. The program included exploration and discussion of provincial policy and curriculum documents to guide Indigenous education in Manitoba and their comparison to traditional teachings and ways of learning. The second phase of the model involved team leaders sharing their learnings by creating proposals and designing learning experiences for staff and students in their respective schools.

Additional program elements (academic and arts curricula, mentorship programming, anti-racism education, Indigenous teachings and games) have since been integrated into existing curricula to consolidate and to extend these earlier learnings. Data gathered from students, staff, parents and community are being used to assess the impacts of the model as a tool to improve the learning outcomes of Indigenous students and as a sustainable and effective approach to professional learning within the school division.

The early years—building the foundation

The critical importance of early development and learning as the foundation for success in school and in life is now well established in research circles. In Manitoba, successive years of data collection using the Early Development Instrument (EDI) confirm this linkage and underscore the importance of early child development and learning initiatives.

In the **Division scolaire franco-manitobaine**, school board leadership has placed a heavy emphasis on the provision of French language child care and pre-school services to ensure school readiness for students and at the same time, to support the preservation of the French language and culture in Manitoba. Since 2001, the school board has passed 88 motions in support of various early child development initiatives.

Full-time kindergarten is offered in all of the division's schools and pre-school programs are available in 19 of 20 schools. Seventeen French-language child care programs across the province operate in DSFM schools with school principals as active participants and voting members of each child care board. Family resource centres exist to date in eight schools within the division, with the ultimate goal being a similar centre in every school. Here as well, school principals work in close collaboration with child care directors and centre coordinators to assess needs and to plan and organize services and programs for the community school.

The division contributes to two ongoing research projects in Early Childhood Development and the school board remains strongly committed to ongoing support for innovative early child development programming in its schools.

Embracing diversity

Diversity and inclusion are common themes in public education today and priority issues for many Manitoba school divisions welcoming record numbers of immigrant and refugee students from every corner of the world. In the **Louis Riel School Division** where more than 45 language and cultural groups have now been identified, school board leadership is dedicated to fostering safe, inviting and inclusive learning environments and developing responsible global citizens

through respectful partnerships between home, school and the community. The René Deleurme Centre serves as the divisional hub for a range of programs from pre-school to adult, all aimed at honouring and supporting diversity within the school community and at the same time providing resources for enhancing teaching capacity across the division to address a wide range of learner readiness and needs.

The Centre's offerings include a Newcomer Family Reception Centre and a multi-faceted intake program for newcomer students in grades 6 to 12 to facilitate their inclusion and integration into the school system and the broader community. Additional programs and services address English language learning needs for students and adults within the division, life skills development for delayed middle years students, an aboriginal education resource centre, a support intervention program for struggling grade 9 to 12 students, and child care services operating in nine school sites across the division.

Beyond these initiatives which speak to linguistic, racial and cultural diversity, the Louis Riel School Division also offers a unique program for cognitively challenged special needs students at the high school level. Bistro in the Park is a fully functioning restaurant which serves as a community training facility where students can develop employability, social and communications skills. The program, which began in 1999, places up to 70 students a year in "real work, in the real world, for real pay" and was recognized by the Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC) at its 2008 awards event.

Human rights and anti-discrimination

In 2003-2004 the Manitoba Theatre for Young People presented "Other Side of the Closet," a play which explored the issue of discrimination based on gender identity and the realities of sexual minority youth in schools and society. The **Winnipeg School Board's** efforts to address this aspect of discrimination within its own schools provoked a volatile and protracted public debate which extended far beyond the schools and the constituents of the division, drawing intense media attention which ultimately led to legal action against one offending media outlet.

Notwithstanding extreme public pressure and very vocal opposition, the school board held fast to its anti-discrimination stance, instituting policy changes and mandatory professional development for all divisional staff with regard to human rights legislation and obligations and effective strategies for addressing acts of discrimination within the division. In each new school year, all new staff participate in this mandatory professional development program. The division has also invested in the development of curricular supports and resources for human rights education in its schools and provided additional monies to all schools for the acquisition of library resources on human rights and anti-discrimination education.

The arts in education

Harold Gardner's work on multiple intelligences and a vast body of research on the importance of the arts in learning

has not gone unnoticed in the **Frontier School Division**. While many members of the public question the value of arts programming in schools and these programs are often the first to go in tough economic times, the Board of Trustees of the Frontier School Division has demonstrated strong and sustained commitment to arts education programming in its schools.

Given the division's geographic territory and the remote locations of many of its schools, dedicated art teachers and formalized music education programs are significant achievements. Local artists in the schools, an annual juried art show, a drama festival and a music jamboree camp provide a range of opportunities to build confidence, inspire creativity and foster self-expression among students and to facilitate the development of a deeper understanding of history, traditions and cultural heritage across the division. The Frontier Fiddlers, an every changing group of students drawn from across the division, are frequent performers at many local community and provincial events and typically draw rave reviews from every audience every time.

Partnering for student success

In many Manitoba school divisions, the challenges of geography and population sparcity often translate into very real limitations in program and service options for students. Cross divisional partnerships and collaboration provide a promising avenue to overcome such limitations.

The Career and Technology Studies (CTS) program developed by the **Prairie Rose School Division** and operated in collaboration with multiple school division, post secondary and community partners enables students in small rural high schools to access technical, vocational learning experiences that would otherwise be unavailable to them. CTS provides a structural framework for aligning learning opportunities in school and community settings to create highly individualized, flexible programming which responds to students' interests, experiences and career aspirations. The program also invites direct community involvement in the public education system, fostering a better understanding of its challenges and a greater sense of community ownership in support of the division's ideals and goals.

In today's complex and rapidly changing society, ethical leadership and service to community are very real challenges for all elected officials at any level of government. The projects and initiatives described above are but a small sampling of the many and varied efforts by public school boards across Manitoba to lead and to serve in ways that matter and make a positive difference in the lives of students, of families, and of the communities which they represent. Human imperfections and shortcomings of public officials notwithstanding, Manitoba school boards "work" because they work for kids and for communities and make Manitoba's public education system a source of inspiration and ideas for educators and Ministry officials across the country. ■

Carolyn Duhamel is Executive Director of the Manitoba School Boards Association. Additional examples and stories of ethical school board leadership in action may be viewed at www.schoolboardswork.ca.

School Boards for the Twenty-First Century: Keeping the Public in Public Education

This article argues that strong, locally elected school boards are essential to the well being of a healthy public school system and that they need to be nurtured and supported.

By Jon Young

School boards are one of Canada's most enduring forms of elected representation, and they have long served as the institutions of local community voice in education and for keeping the public actively involved in public school governance. However, over the last two decades, across a broad range of important educational matters—funding, collective bargaining, curriculum and assessment, school closures, to name only a few—there has, in most provinces, been marked centralizing of authority away from school boards to provincial governments. To date Manitoba has generally stood apart from many of these developments and its school boards remain among the strongest in Canada. Nonetheless, the pressures remain and the future is uncertain.

A significant part of the strength of Manitoba's school boards lies in the autonomy and the political and moral authority that comes with the ability to raise local education taxes. Currently funding issues—the adequacy of the total education budget to meet an ever increasing set of provincial policy expectations; the balance between provincial and local revenues and the autonomy of school boards to set their own tax levels; the processes for equalizing per pupil funding levels across school divisions—are seen by many trustees as fundamentally undermining their ability to carry out their mandate.

Similarly, recent changes to the *Public Schools Act* that take away from school boards the authority to close schools without Ministerial approval are seen as a further weakening of local authority. This article argues that strong, locally elected school boards are essential to the wellbeing of a healthy *public* school system and that as such they need to be nurtured and supported.

Why school boards matter—the public nature of public schooling

There are three primary characteristics that have come to define what is "public" about public schooling in Canada. Simply put these can be summarized as the touchstones of: *public accessibility and equality*—that all children should have access to, and the opportunity to benefit equally from school; *public funding*—that the costs of schooling should be shared fairly across all segments of society and that the quality of education received by any child should not be related to the ability of the child or their parents to pay for all or part of that schooling; and *public accountability and control*—that decisions about the nature of public schooling should be made through public political processes and by people elected to carry out this responsibility. Even though there is no shortage of examples of where we have fallen far short, the history of Canadian public schooling can be viewed as the struggle to establish and sustain these ideals.

This belief was embedded in the 1871 legislation that established public education in Manitoba and, while today's school boards and school divisions are different in a number of ways from the more than 1,600 operating

boards that existed across the province at the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the importance of local representation and local accountability has remained a fundamental aspect of the governance of public schooling in the province.

While school board elections generally attract fairly limited interest and school trustees work, for the most part, out of the limelight, their existence allows the public in each school division to shape its programs, within the broad policy mandates of the province, to reflect local needs and interests. School boards provide the vehicle through which local issues such as special programming or a school closure, as well as serious individual grievances that cannot be resolved professionally, can be addressed locally by people who are likely to have both an awareness of the details of the context and a stake in the outcome, in a way difficult to imagine at the level of provincial politics.

In performing this role, elected school boards also provide the democratic framework that is essential to allowing professional teachers, principals and superintendents to do their work and to bring their expertise to the task of educating society's youth. As Starratt (2004) reminds school leaders:

> *The biggest issue for public administrators is legitimacy. Their legitimacy comes from the people they serve. They are instruments of self-government by the people, with obligations to the people's well-being (Starratt, 2004, p. 27).*

If public schooling is to remain public in the manner outlined in this article, then this point is critical. It is the school board that constitutes not only the interface between the provincial government and the local community but also the local interface of professional expertise and public accountability. Without this public school educators would be robbed of an enduring source of support and legitimacy.

Furthermore, the collective voice of school trustees expressed through the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) plays an important role, along with other organizations such as the Manitoba Teachers Society (MTS) and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), in ensuring that important provincial educational decisions are accompanied by public debate, providing a degree of balance that has served Manitoba well.

Looking to the future/nurturing strong local school boards

There is nothing that is new or radical in these touchstones of public schooling. They are guiding principles that are, in fact, explicitly spelled out in the preamble to the Manitoba *Public Schools Act* (Figure 1). The expectation that "democratic local school divisions and districts play an important role in providing public education that is responsive to local needs and conditions" sets up and acknowledges an inherent political tension between provincial goals and priorities and local needs and interests reflective of a diverse society.

These tensions are exacerbated by the fact that school boards are a "single interest entity"—their commitment, focus and mandate being public schools—while the provincial government has a much broader mandate that requires their attention. As such, it has to be expected that, probably more often than not, there will be a level of disagreement between school boards and the provincial government, but it is a serious mistake to assume that such disagreements somehow make a case that school boards are dysfunctional or out-dated. Rather, at best, these tensions are productive and creative. They ensure: that issues are considered carefully and their consideration include multiple voices; that decision-making is characterized by innovation and accommodation; and, that decision-makers can be held to public account and to the stated ideals of public education.

What are some of the things that might support this "best case scenario" in Manitoba?

Respectful relations between the provincial government and local school boards.

The task of balancing provincial priorities with local interests requires a high level of trust and collaboration between these two levels of government—an appreciation that there are likely to be legitimate differences between the two and a willingness to work together in the face of these differences. Recently the British Columbia government and the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) signed a "Protocol of Recognition" that laid out their commitment to work together in the interests of public education in the province, and a similar Manitoba document along with more frequent joint forums on education might be a useful vehicle for strengthening mutual trust and collaboration.

Provincial legislation, policies and practices that provide school boards adequate levels of autonomy on important local issues. For school boards to be effective—for committed people to be prepared to seek election and to serve on them, and for their constituents to look to them as community leaders—they must be seen to exert influence in important aspects of local schooling. What, specifically, those aspects will be are likely to vary over time as provincial governments come to see particular educational issues, such as school closures, as sufficiently important to their education agenda as to warrant a reclamation of provincial authority. However, where such developments represent not an isolated event but an ongoing erosion of local decision-making, they clearly undermine the vitality and purpose of boards.

Funding arrangements that provide adequate resources for local initiatives. An important corollary to previous requirement is that school boards have access to the resources necessary

to develop and implement local educational strategies In Manitoba this goes to issues of the appropriate balance between provincial and local taxation, as well as the role of the provincial government on defining that balance (directly through legislation as was done by Manitoba's Progressive Conservative government in the 1990s or indirectly through Tax Incentive Grants as is currently the case) and in addressing unequal tax bases between school boards (Henley & Young, 2008). Such issues are inevitably contentious, but when school boards consistently feel powerless to implement the programs that their communities are demanding, their viability is again brought into question.

Community engagement as a core function of School Trustees. The ongoing public participation in educational decision-making critical to a healthy public school system makes important demands of school board trustees in terms of community engagement. Trustee credibility as the representatives of local interests has to rest on more than a once-in-three-years election (or acclamation). Rallis, Shibles & Swanson (2002) remind us that the role of school boards is to connect the public to its schools, and as such they are "stewards of the community conversation about schools"

Figure 1

The Preamble to the Manitoba Public Schools Act

HER MAJESTY by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba enacts as follows:

WHEREAS a strong public school system is a fundamental element of a democratic society;

AND WHEREAS the purpose of the public school system is to serve the best educational interests of students;

AND WHEREAS the public school system should contribute to the development of students' talents and abilities;

AND WHEREAS the public schools should contribute to the development of a fair, compassionate, healthy and prosperous society;

AND WHEREAS the public schools must take into account the diverse needs and interests of the people of Manitoba;

AND WHEREAS democratic local school divisions and districts play an important role in providing public education that is responsive to local needs and conditions;

AND WHEREAS parents have a right and a responsibility to be knowledgeable about and participate in the education of their children;

AND WHEREAS public schools require skilled and committed staff in order to be effective;

AND WHEREAS it is in the public interest to further harmonious relations between teachers and their employers through the process of collective bargaining consistent with the principle that resources must be managed efficiently and effectively;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba and school divisions and districts share the responsibility for the financing of education.

(p. 251). To fulfill this task, they suggest, school boards and school trustees have to provide a range of invitational forums—formal school board meetings being only one—for such conversations characterized by *inclusion, dialogue* and *deliberation.*

This requires a proactive stance from school boards that: seeks out multiple voices and ensures that they are listened to; fosters a process whereby different perspectives are properly explained and understood; and, when choices are to be made between different courses of action, ensures that they are well reasoned and carefully articulated. It is through these processes that trustees demonstrate their integrity and their commitment to the educational well-being of the community's children and cultivate the support needed to make the difficult decisions that invariably go with the role.

Conclusion

Canada's public education system was recently reported by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce as being second only to Finland in a survey of seventeen industrialized countries—a survey that placed the United Kingdom eleventh and the United States sixteenth (Chamber of Commerce, 2008). Yet often we turn to those very countries for direction in "re-forming" our schools.

In similar vein, while Manitoba has among the strongest school boards in Canada we are less likely to celebrate that commitment to keeping the public in public education than to look to provinces such as Ontario—where school boards have no local taxing authority and where the single Toronto District School Board attempts to reflect the "local" interests of more students than are in school in all of Manitoba—and think that *we* are somehow out-of-step or backward.

The argument here is the opposite: Manitoba needs to hold onto and nurture its school boards and to celebrate the strength of their school trustees. ■

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Ethical Leadership in Developing Countries:
Education in Afghanistan

Ethical Leadership is knowing your core values and having the courage to live them in all parts of your life in service of the common good. – www.ethicalleadership.org

By Anne Longston

The moment I set foot off the airplane in Kabul I felt overwhelmed by the enormity of what I had done. The dusty arid air, the jutted mountains, the excess of international military planes and vehicles, machine guns and barbed wire, and people speaking in Dari brought home the reality of my decision to leave a safe and stable position with the Manitoba Department of Education and go to work for the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan.

I had been asked to work in a country that has been at war for thirty years, where human rights are still being sought, and where the lives and value of women have been destroyed. This is a country where hope must be the overarching ingredient in all the work that is done or discouragement will engulf its peoples. This is a country where the education of its people will be a life changing opportunity for the future. For me, working in Kabul for eight months would turn out to be the rewarding, frustrating, challenging and learning opportunity of a lifetime.

When I was approached in 2007 by a Canadian organization to go to work in Kabul on a CIDA-based project, I was instantly intrigued. It was at a time in my life where things were coming to a natural conclusion: my children were grown and attending university, I was approaching the magic age of 55, and my husband and I were talking next steps in our life planning. I will admit that the choices we make in life are not always altruistic. I could say I chose to go to Kabul to make a contribution to improved education, especially for girls, or to be part of Canada's non-military planning for after 2011—and those two *were* factors in the decision. However, it is also true that the inner soul thrives on challenge and being involved in a project like this would, I hoped, be personally satisfying and rewarding.

The actual particulars of the substance of my work in Afghanistan were

not known to me when I left Canada. I was hired to be an Advisor to the Minister of Education and to build capacity in the staff within the Ministry. Where and how I would work would be a mutual decision after my initial orientation. The need of the Ministry was to have someone with a background in education especially at a senior government level to work on their continuing development. I left with my suitcase somewhat loaded with my own reference materials and the Manitoba Education Website burned onto a CD (who knew what kind of internet access there would be?), and the reassurance from colleagues back home that they were just an email away.

Arrival: the reality

When I arrived at the Ministry of Education I was amazed at the work that had taken place. An initial curriculum had been written for both students and pre-service teachers, the number of pre-service teachers enrolled, especially women, was escalating; schools were being built and girls were being allowed to attend school. For such a war torn country significant advances seemed to have been made in just seven years.

The work to be done however was monumental. More than half the children still do not attend school. In many villages the school is a tent, and often just a place on a blanket under a tree. The shortage of female teachers is the major restriction in having more classes begin. In elementary girls can only be taught by women as parents will not send them otherwise. Women were not allowed to go to school in the recent past so there is an immense shortage of women to put into teacher training. In some locations the acting teachers are considered illiterate. One could be overwhelmed by the current challenges.

I had the privilege of working in three key areas within the Ministry. The first was the establishment of the Education Development Board which would report to the Minister. This Board would be made up of representatives from the main donor countries, some NGO representation and Ministry of Education leaders. Its purpose was to coordinate the donor funding and provide policy recommendations to the Minister. The second area was to be the policy advisor on the Renewal of the Education Strategic Plan. The final area was in the Teacher Education Directorate. This department holds a significant role in the training of future teachers, over one hundred thousand needed, a daunting task.

In all of my work I found people who were full of hope, willing to work hard and long hours to make an education system work, a people who were outwardly and sincerely appreciative of my help especially in their effort to take control of the system.

The work of building capacity

Kenneth W. Johnson believes that ethical leadership balances achieving the organizational aspirations that are realistically attainable at this time with developing the organizational culture over time.

Building capacity with the title of Policy Advisor to the Minister allowed me access to the work that was being done in the Ministry but it also, and understandably, resulted in some wariness behind it. Why should they trust me? I was unknown and had much to prove. As I developed my relationships with Afghan colleagues, I was acutely aware that acting in an authority role could gain me a trace of power over people but it was the leadership role that was much more necessary. We needed to move from I to we and learn to work as a team; they would be the experts. In reality I became a teacher again. Critical thinking, questioning, organizational skills, belief in one's ability were significant components of our daily work. Whatever I approached I needed to do it with dignity, respect, and in consultation with the staff.

And although I felt I had something to share, I soon realized that I had much to learn. There were two distinct components that were unfamiliar to me: first, the Afghan people and their way of life and, secondly, the impact that their recent history has on the patterns that have been imprinted especially for women. No existing cultural training could have prepared me for the enormity of the change; much time in those sessions is spent on teaching you not to offend people with your Western ways and not enough time on the realization that religion, tradition and history are a part of every moment, every day of their lives.

In my planning to go to Kabul I had wrestled with the notion of how I would build capacity within the Ministry without it being an attempt to effect a Canadian conversion. Over my months there I became very aware of other international groups and their determination to transplant their nations programs into the country. I noted the international authoritarian stance that took place when donor money was at stake. I was challenged by being a Canadian while acting on behalf of the Afghans in my work. The Minister was new when I arrived and was a strong proponent of having his people take back the education system, one necessarily influenced by internationals, in my opinion a stance that was vital to the survival of their education system. Internationals come and go, but the donor funding still remains very much at the forefront of what can and cannot be done in the Ministry.

We carry along our political beliefs in our pockets. I have always tried to make my socialist values be apparent in my work in education. I want to be a strong advocate for quality public education for all children and believed that this set of values would be my guiding force in any work I approached. With time I added to this set a determination to support the self-reliance of my Afghan colleagues on their own ability to take charge of the education system.

Sometimes the activities that are being pursued challenge your personal beliefs based on your own country's context. For example it was determined by the government that there would be country-wide educational tests to be completed by 2010. In Canada, international, federal and provincial tests are commonplace for students. The tests in Afghanistan, however, are in place for teachers. This is a result of two factors. First a literacy assessment was done of teachers last year with 20 percent not meeting the standard required. The

second is that much donor funding is focused on teacher development and a standard for measurement needed to be in place. One can understand the purpose in this.

What then became of most importance in my work regarding the test was to try to ensure that we built in fairness, quality of content, ease of implementation and security. This posed many challenges when you work in a country where in many regions electricity is non-existent, where some communities are only accessible by donkey, and where access to learning and training for teachers is difficult. By 2010 150,000 teachers will write the test and have their salaries and subsequent training prescribed by the results. The ultimate in high stakes testing.

And forward

The first question that people now ask me is weren't you worried about your security? The media has a lot to answer for in its reporting of life in Afghanistan. One can never overestimate the need for safety but in time I learned there isn't a Taliban behind every bush and not every turbaned man is a threat. Fathers walk down the street carrying their daughters as the family walks to the shops; mothers guide their children to school; young people scurry off to work or university, men and women alike. People are trying to live a normal life; it is the circumstances of their history that make things seem so overwhelming to those of us looking in from outside.

In my final months in Kabul I had the opportunity to become engaged with a girls' orphanage close to our residence. Thirty girls from ages 2 to 17 were housed in a small residence with a house mother who was determined that these girls would succeed. The orphanage was an underground activity during the Taliban time and Afghan Canadians continue to support its existence. These girls would be on the street or in very dire circumstances without the support of donors. My volunteer work there provided some help, such as finding a dentist to attend to them free of charge, but my work in coming back to Canada is to find sustainable funding so the orphanage doesn't live month to month wondering if they have enough food. Poverty is significant everywhere.

I will look for an opportunity to return to Kabul to work. I enjoyed the challenges that were presented day to day and the satisfaction of seeing projects completed and underway. The Ministry people that I worked with were determined to have their children, especially girls, attending school and eventually contributing to the rebuilding of the nation. They do have hope that things will change, which at this point can only happen with the involvement of foreign troops and civilian specialists.

All in all it is about the children. ■

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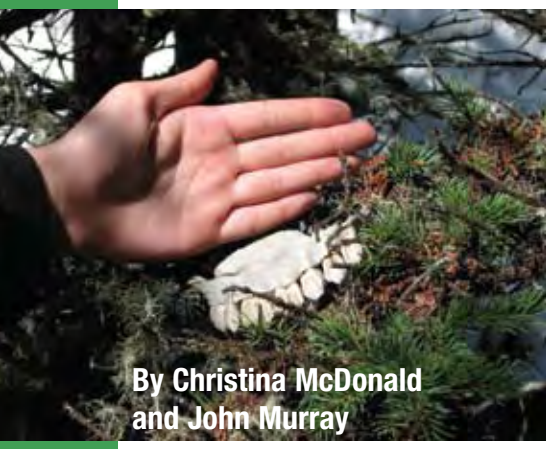

By Christina McDonald and John Murray

Education for Sustainable Development in Manitoba: **Leading the Way Forward**

The best place to begin to shape a very different and transformed future is close to home.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a vision of education that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. It is generally acknowledged that there is no single route or system of belief that leads inevitably to sustainable development and the kind of future the notion challenges us to embrace. Indeed, the pathways often cited among advocates of ESD encourage that tensions be nurtured, dialogues take place, options be debated, and that people become energetically engaged in shaping a radically different future for our planet.

That future is—at this point—not known and is perhaps unknowable. This does not immediately imply that the future cannot be somehow re-shaped in accordance with a whole new set of underlying principles. What is known is that the social and economic systems of recent decades can no longer provide a sustainable component to the planet's ecosystems.

There are many different stakeholders interacting in the work of sustainable development (i.e., governments, businesses, educational institutions, media, not for profit organizations, youth). Each of these contributors has a different vision of sustainable development and how it can effectively provide a contribution to it. Some are interested in environmental preservation and protection, some have economic development interests while others may be more interested in social development.

In addition, how each nation, cultural group and individual views sustainable development will depend on its own values and systems. The challenge is to bring these different stakeholders together so that they may collaborate in partnerships to find a balance between their interests and priorities, all the while not losing identity and their particular vision.

Various approaches to ESD encourage people to adopt a stance of humility in the face of the complexities of issues threatening planetary sustainability. We strive to understand and assess our own values and those of the society in which we live in the context of sustainability. It's a seemingly huge undertaking to imagine an attempt at some degree of coordination, but most agree that the best place to begin to shape a very different and transformed future is close to home—and this includes our families and schools.

This article will attempt to:

- Outline a general framework upon which school leaders can see how the system of schooling links importantly to the personal and collective transformations that ESD calls for;
- Identify some of the particular contributions that Manitoba school leaders are making with respect to ESD among schools and school divisions; and
- Identify some conditions that need to be satisfied to demonstrate effective leadership and strengthen ESD programs.

The very concept of ESD confronts the way most of us think about the world today. Recent decades of explosive global economic growth and increased consumption patterns actually *characterize* the aspirations of a large proportion of the planet's societies. ESD challenges these aspirations by encouraging us to imagine a different future and reflect on how our values, beliefs and current behaviours might affect our collective ability to realize a future that is in balance and harmonious. To seek after something like this requires that we also change our view of some of the purposes of education. One might suggest that we need to change THE purposes of education. You are invited to read on and discover where you have a crucial role

in providing the kind of leadership ESD action is asking of us.

An ESD framework

If ESD is to be an effective tool for engaging people in negotiating amongst themselves towards a sustainable future (i.e., making thoughtful or thought-provoking decisions and then acting upon them), it must first address the way we think about sustainable development and about education in general. Essential to ESD are the following skills that can provide school leaders with an accessible framework for embedding the principles of ESD into the life of their learning environments:

Envisioning (Future Thinking): Being able to imagine a better future and a different future. The premise is that if we know where we want to go, we will be better able to work out how to get there.

Critical thinking and reflection: Learning to question our current belief systems and to recognize the assumptions underlying our knowledge, perspectives and opinions. Critical thinking skills help people learn to examine the economic, environmental, social or cultural structures in the context of searching for, and achieving, a sustainable future.

Systems thinking: Acknowledging the remarkable complexities that occur among the many interacting and interdependent closed systems of planet Earth. Searching out links and synergies when trying to find solutions to problems that affect—or have been encouraged by—human activity among these systems.

Building partnerships: Promoting dialogue and negotiation; learning to work together.

Participation in decision-making: Empowering people to genuinely believe that their voices are heard, and that they can individually and collectively make a difference within their lifetimes.

Imagine for a moment these characteristics cultivated, made visible and embedded explicitly within the life of the school and applied in all aspects of a school's mission and educational plan, programming, procurement, financial management, facilities management, school governance and all other aspects of school life. Sustainability could be an integral part of the learning process and the physical building itself becomes a sustainable school using a "whole school" approach.

According to leading ESD researchers, this approach requires the school system to include teaching, education, culture, leadership and collaboration. For implementation, ESD requires an orientation towards action; teaching and learning that is a reflection of local, regional and global issues; a school climate that would encourage independence of thinking; and ongoing professional learning opportunities for all staff irrespective of role in schools. Moreover, learning communities such as the ones we are connected to should be in agreement that the pursuit of future planning and decision making will include some or all of the above transformative characteristics. These can and are being modeled among our school leaders, and it is happening right now.

Manitoba—Bringing the framework into focus

Manitoba's leadership in ESD has been recognized nationally and internationally for its contributions to sustainable development's vision. For government, taking action means integrating sustainable development concepts into curriculum, supporting educators in their attempts to teach about, for and through sustainability. It also takes the form of providing funding dedicated to ESD to schools and school divisions, ensuring that government policy, regulatory and operational frameworks support sustainability practices and principles, developing programs, and forging novel partnerships and collaboration with other organizations regionally, nationally and internationally to advance ESD.

Manitoba has had success collaborating with others to advance ESD. Examples of key activities include:

- Providing workshops, summer institutes and other professional learning opportunities for teachers and school division administrators;
- Establishing and supporting Manitoba's Education for Sustainable Development Working Group and the national-level ESD Canada;
- Providing learning opportunities for senior level officials of school divisions on how to incorporate sustainable development into governance, operations and programs (e.g., the Sustainability and Education Academy at Hecla Island in 2008);
- Supporting schools through a Green Schools Initiative (Green Manitoba-Eco-Solutions) that provides resources to schools to enhance the sustainability of their operations (energy, water, waste, transportation);
- Supporting ESD research (e.g., working with the Winnipeg-based International Institute for Sustainable Development in assessing students' sustainable development knowledge, values, attitudes, behaviours); and
- Working with Canadian ministries of education to develop an ESD Framework for Collaboration and Action through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

What do we mean by bringing the framework into focus? It means all sectors partnering through a network such as the Manitoba Education for Sustainable Development Working Group. In 2008-2009 this group planned and delivered an international "Choose the Future" ESD conference that engaged a broad array of educators, business leaders, non-government organizations and government representatives having common interests in sustainable development. It means hosting Sustainability Awards of Excellence, developing important new resources such as "Wetlands and the World" (by Ducks Unlimited Canada), and conducting research to assess citizen and students' sustainable development competencies. It means planning and hosting the Manitoba Envirothon (by the Manitoba Forestry Association), hosting the Youth Encouraging Sustainability forum, developing active and safe routes to school and commuter challenge programming, and developing tools and information about climate change.

For school divisions and schools, it means working together to create healthy environmental, economic and socially responsible living and learning environments for students and staff. Many schools are now models of effective practices for the community at large. Construction of 'green schools' is underway using the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, some surpassing silver standards. School leadership

teams are engaged in learning about effective tools, practices and approaches in incorporating sustainable development into school division operations, programs and activities.

Divisions are planning and developing sustainable development action plans for the present and future, educators are participating in professional learning opportunities that focus on education for sustainable development. Schools are engaging in naturalization initiatives and greening their operations which may include energy and water efficiency initiatives, waste reduction, offering more sustainable transportation, and promoting healthy living.

Seeing ourselves as leading the way forward

Recent research trends are identifying two possible programming paths with respect to ESD—the "weak" and the "strong". A weak ESD program is characterized by top-down initiatives, assuming that a consensus already exists on sustainability, and having passive individuals who are accustomed to the disempowerment that aligns with being taught "the right way to do things." That can lead only to a system of ESD which simply reacts to an outside influence.

Alternatively, a strong ESD program takes its inspiration from quite the opposite set of characteristics—it encourages vigorous dialogue, lets conflicts of interest and competing views flourish openly, engages people in collective actions, seeks to have students and staff understand the power relations that exist in politics and the consumer society, and is empowering. Such a system of ESD in a school system is all about viewing learning as gaining new competencies and the confidence to effect healthy change.

As important as visioning for a sustainable future is, it is also important to look back and reflect on what has worked for us as leaders for educational change. Whether you are a government official or an official within a school division (be it superintendent, assistant superintendent, secretary treasurer, school business official, trustee, consultant, principal, or other) or teach in a post-secondary institution, the lessons learned are the same. If we wish to be leaders in ESD and transformative educational change, a number of principles need to be embedded into our education systems. ESD is seen to move forward when the following conditions are met:

- ESD is identified as a priority at the highest level of the organization and operationalized at all levels.
- Dedicated staff are assigned within the organization to focus on ESD. A coordinator or a coordinating committee can assist with navigating the complexities of the education system.
- Both human and fiscal resources are acquired, dedicated and directed towards advancing ESD.
- Staff are regularly provided with encouragement and recognition for ESD initiative and for work done. Recognize that ESD is already emerging in your organizations, schools and classrooms. Highlight and acknowledge effective practices and visioning and expand strong programming system-wide.
- Partners are sought outside the organization. Work with not for profit organizations, with industry and other stakeholders.
- Others' views are respected and the subject of active dialogue. There are many pathways and options available to promote sustainability.

We recommend making a long-term commitment to being a learner in both the theoretical and practical foundations of ESD. Feeling the "essential tensions" along the way makes for fruitful, vibrant debate and discussion. This path is considered essential for those in a position of influence. That influence then takes the form of engaging one's entire system of education in collective actions. There is much an educational leader can do to work towards a sustainable future. ■

Dr. Christina McDonald, formerly Sustainable Development Coordinator for MECY, was recently appointed Chief Operations Officer with Green Manitoba-EcoSolutions, an agency of the Manitoba government. John Murray is currently a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education and Centre for Earth Observation Science at the University of Manitoba.

Renewing Teacher Education:

Educational Responsibilities and Relationships in a Pluralistic World

By Wayne Serebrin and Lydia Hedrich

What do we understand by "education"? What does it mean to have educational responsibility? Who has an educational responsibility? Where does such a responsibility come from? And what does it entail? And how do we capture and characterize what educational responsibility entails today?

– Biesta, 2006, p. 97

Surely, as educators and as adult members of society, we are responsible for thinking critically about these and other important questions. Drawing upon the wisdom of 20th Century thinker Hannah Arendt (1958), we believe our responses to such questions must be in terms of *who* we are. Arendt writes that who we are is a matter of our *action in the world with and among others*. She explains that it is through speech and deeds, taken "in concert" with others-as-equals, that we reveal our "distinct uniqueness" and generate "the capacity" to imagine and reach for new educational possibilities.

For Arendt, we "cannot act in isolation," since who we are—our very appearance in the world—is crucially dependent upon others taking up our beginnings/initiatives (Arendt, 1958, as cited in Biesta, 2010, Action, Freedom and Plurality section, 4-5). She pushes this idea even further by proposing that our actions are "never possible without *plurality*" (without others' *differing responses*), and she reminds us that *our* actions are contingent upon *others'* freedom to act in the public realm (Biesta, 2010, Action, Freedom and Plurality section, 5).

While it is not possible for us to control how others might respond to our beginnings/initiatives, or for them to control how we might respond to their beginnings/initiatives, through our relationships we foster the potential for response to arise. Most of us can point to moments in our lives when we took seriously the difficulty of "being in

relationship" with others (Biesta, 2006, p. 92), and we used our imaginations to experience the "disorientation that is necessary to understanding just how the world looks different to someone else" (Disch, 1994, p. 159; as cited in Biesta, 2010, Existing Politically section, 6). It is in *pluralistic* relationships that we forge a "connection-in-difference," and by responding publicly to one another's beginnings/initiatives, we make it possible for "something uniquely new" to come into the world (Biesta, 2010, Existing Politically section, 3).

Who has helped us "appear in the world"?

This heading was posed as a lingering question during an annual professional development conference for Seven Oaks School Division administrators, led by John Wiens (Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba) and David Coulter (Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia). While the two of us can gratefully point to many—children we have taught, children's families, our adult students, our teachers, our colleagues, scholars we have listened to and read, among others—who have helped us "appear in the world" over the course of our combined more than six decades as educators, each of us has selected just one individual to help us narrate how this "other" helped provide a space within which we could respond to educational questions and challenges, in new and different ways, as unique, singular beings (Biesta, 2006, p. 68).

Lydia tells the story of how as an elementary teacher she intuitively related to the children—intellectually, socially, culturally, aesthetically and ethically—but, that it was not until she became a teacher in Seven Oaks School Division and joined (along with her colleagues) the monthly professional reading and educational dialogues, initiated and sustained by David Coulter (who was then Principal), that she was invited to publicly respond in speech and acts to questions that mattered deeply to her: "what is 'good' education?"; "what is the purpose of our schools?"; and, "how do we get better at educating?" She says that as vulnerable as she felt entering this educational dialogue, it was the *first time* in either her university preparation to become a teacher or in her practice as a teacher and participant in "professional development" that she began to genuinely nurture her intellectual curiosities as an educator. Similar to what Maxine Greene (1978) describes as coming to "wide-awakeness," Lydia began to ask herself whether as a teacher she had been using her "freedom" or whether she had "simply acceded to the imposition of patterned behaviour and assigned roles" (pp. 42-43).

David introduced her and her colleagues to a breadth and depth of

scholarship and provoked "passionate thinking" (Arendt) and dialogue which led to understanding teaching as both "means-end activity" *and* "ethical action" in everyday, educational contexts and situations, in educational relationships, and, ultimately, and most importantly, in helping "children lead good and worthwhile lives now and in the future" (Coulter et al., 2007, Teaching as Professional Practice section, 4-5).

Lydia says that none of this was easy, but that "in concert" with David and her colleagues, and through the action of interpreting scholarship *while* posing and responding to personal/professional questions and continuously interrogating everyday practice, she became democratically engaged in a kind of "living understanding" (Arendt) and experienced a different way of being as an educator. Finally, she began to make sense of the discomfort she had long felt as an education student and elementary teacher about hierarchical relationships that privilege educational theory over practice and theoretical over practical judgments.

Similarly, Wayne tells the story of arriving at the Faculty of Education as a new professor (having been formerly a childcare director and early years teacher, but fresh from a PhD program), uncertain about how to explore his theoretical knowing in a curricular way with teacher candidates (BEd students) whose university experiences had been predominately transmission-oriented and whose practicum experiences were, in the majority, teacher-directed.

Wayne says that Joan Irvine, a much loved and highly-respected teacher educator at the Faculty of Education, reached out to him and offered that they *co-teach* their early years curriculum, language arts, and social studies courses. Wayne felt the same vulnerability Lydia had felt joining the public educational dialogue with her colleagues and David Coulter: "how long would it take for Joan to discover," he worried, "how unready he felt to take on the responsibility of educating a new generation of teachers?" But, like David had been for Lydia, Joan was curious about Wayne's ideas and his

wonderings about practice, and the two of them built a caring, trusting relationship with one another—as equals and co-learners—while each contributed his/her different scholarly and practical perspectives and experiences to their shared dialogue and teacher education curriculum initiatives.

Together and *with* teacher candidates, they designed pedagogical spaces in which they imagined how they and the teacher candidates might act as *inquirers*. For them, "inquiring" meant taking the time to stop and notice, while participants' drew upon their individual and common interests, curiosities, and questions (in synchrony with the power of language arts and social studies disciplinary perspectives and processes), to explore the socio-cultural, historical, political and physical realties of Winnipeg communities (through which many of them had hitherto moved with only passing awareness).

Joan and Wayne encouraged teacher candidates to explore these communities in as much depth as possible, to make connections to what they were reading, and to think and reflect together upon their "being-in-the-world" in a new way—grappling with understandings of their own "values and commitments" and critiquing the social "conditions working upon them" (Greene, 1978, p. 48). At the same time, Joan and Wayne also "lived" and self-reflectively shared their parallel community inquiry—conducted with a small group of young children—with these teacher candidates.

> While it is not possible for us to control how others might respond to our beginnings/initiatives, or for them to control how we might respond to their beginnings/initiatives, through our relationships we foster the potential for response to arise.

How do teacher candidates, teachers and faculty learn together to help children appear in the world?

Again we have borrowed from questions posed by John Wiens and David Coulter during their Seven Oaks conference facilitation. To address this question, we begin by describing our coming together as teacher educators—bringing into interconnection the separate worlds of university, initial teacher preparation and ongoing, school-based learning from teaching—all aimed at recognizing and acting in response to our educational responsibility toward children.

Lydia (now as Principal) and Wayne (seconded from the Faculty of Education) came together to initiate and sustain a yearlong, practitioner inquiry study, exploring the children's use and learning of multiple literacies, with the teachers at École Constable Edward Finney School. Once we focused on our shared responsibility to the children, slowly we began to co-create a fragile culture of respect for one another's ideas and an authentic openness to learning from ourselves, from one another, and from educators at a distance who were exploring similar inquiry questions. This initial collaboration awakened Lydia and Wayne to the transformative potential of faculty and teachers learning together with and from one another and with and from children.

Now the only missing piece was the teacher candidates. At this point Liz Coffman (from the Faculty of Education) joined our efforts. Liz, acting with the administrators and teachers at École Constable Edward Finney School, invited a small group of Education faculty members to collaborate with her and the teachers to design a pedagogical space for first year teacher candidates (in our two-year, BEd program) to observe and participate side-by-side with experienced teachers who valued and deliberately used their particular knowledge of individual children to make "good" educational decisions.

Much of the teacher candidates' learning in this context focused on dialogue with teachers and faculty about "practical judgment"—learning to grasp "the relevant features in a complex or rapidly changing environment (such as a classroom); particularly, in terms of exploring how teachers deliberate upon doing "the right thing at the right time for the right reasons with the right people" (Coulter et al., 2007, Good Teaching as the Exercise of Judgment section, 4-5). It would not be easy to enact such powerful teacher education curriculum exclusively in a university classroom, nor do we feel confident that such professional dialogue among teacher candidates, collaborating teachers, and faculty advisors would necessarily happen in every practicum setting.

Layering on top of this first-year teacher education experience, Lydia and Wayne then moved to support administrators, teachers, and small faculty teams, in their collaborations within and across three more schools (École James Nisbet Community School, West St. Paul School, and École Riverbend Community School). This time teacher candidates in their second/final year of Education alternated between connected Foundations and Curriculum and Instruction courses (flexibly co-taught by small groups of faculty and teachers on-site in the three schools and at the Faculty) and interdisciplinary inquiries with small groups of children over two, six-week periods in the fall and winter terms (teacher candidates were still involved in their usual practicum placements).

While the pedagogical designs were negotiated differently in each school setting, in all of the school settings the participating teachers and other members of the school and Division "family," faculty, and teacher candidates played multiple and reciprocal roles; each contributed different experiences and perspectives, but all shared responsibility for providing spaces for individuals and groups of children to uniquely show "who they are and who they want to be" (Biesta, 2006, p. 6).

Have we "got" teacher education "right"? Of course not, we have merely "scratched the surface" of how we imagine teacher education might otherwise be. But, we have begun a new teacher education initiative—an initiative through which, as educators and adult members of society, we have "awakened" to the realization that we can act to take up responsibilities for children better when we educate "in concert," rather than acting in separate institutions and as lone individuals. This is, indeed, a new beginning…. ■

Lydia Hedrich is an Assistant Superintendent, Seven Oaks School Division. Dr. Wayne Serebrin is a Professor with the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

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Exploring Ethical Leadership:

A Superintendents' Professional Learning Project

The work of educational leadership should be work that is simultaneously intellectual and moral; an activity characterized by a blend of human, professional, and civic concerns; a work of cultivating an environment for learning that is humanly fulfilling and socially responsible.
– (Starratt, 2004, p.3)

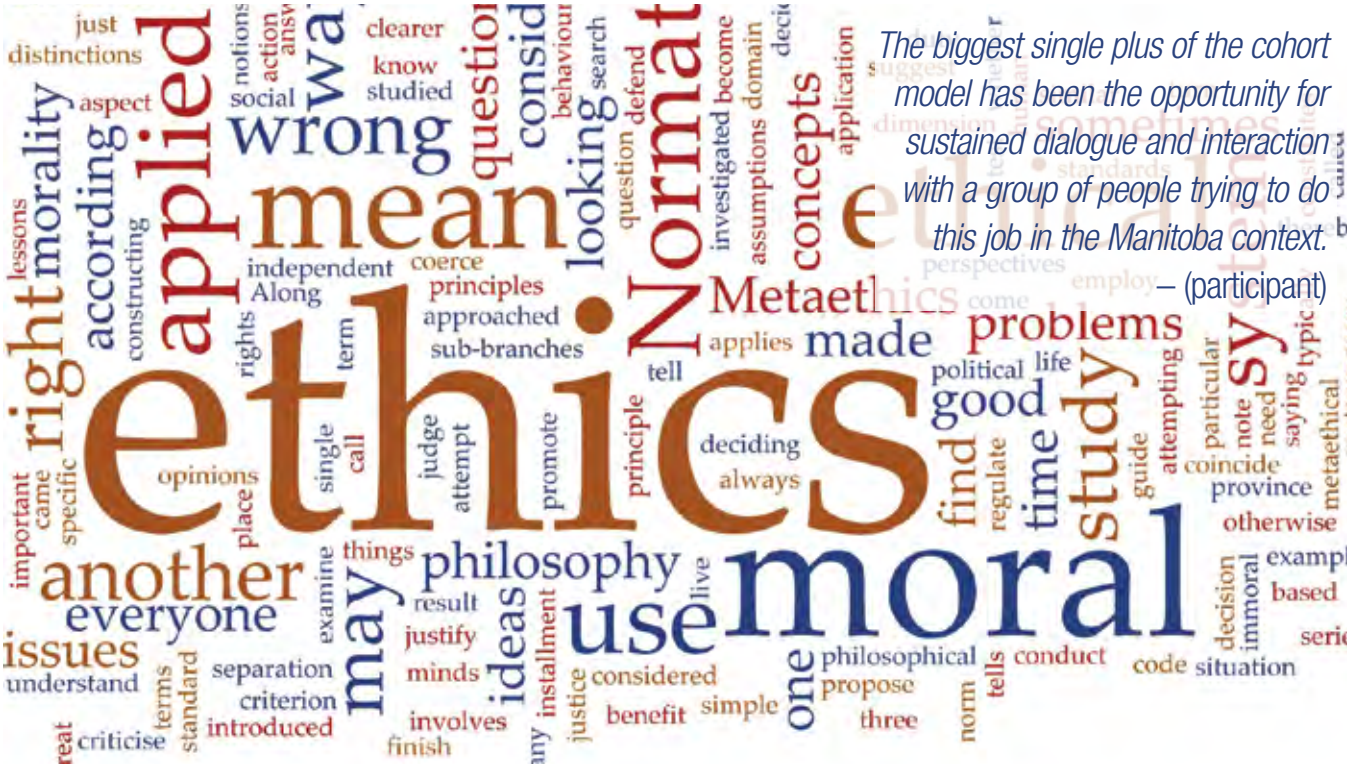
Increased accountability for student achievement and the implementation of provincial priorities, changing demographics due to growing immigrant and Aboriginal populations, and the necessity for ever greater fiscal restraint—all contribute to the growing complexity of the school superintendency. In Manitoba the challenge and opportunity for leadership at the local level remains strong, compared to many other jurisdictions, with superintendents and boards still able to exert significant influence over the quality of education. There is, however, no formal provincial preparation for this role; individuals seek out academic postgraduate programs or depend on the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) or conferences outside Manitoba for much of their professional learning.

MASS has a history of providing strong conferences for its members, and has attempted to thread them thematically in order to nourish the growth of its members over time. It also instituted a Mentorship Program three years ago that provides ongoing support to members in their first, and often second, year in the position. Yet we knew we were not providing programs for more experienced members that met the criteria in the research literature for strong professional development. When the Executive learned of a program conducted by the superintendents association in Iowa (SAI) that centred on Ethical Leadership, they decided to launch a similar program here in the fall of 2008.

The program

The MASS Executive chose to extend the invitation to all experienced superintendents and assistant superintendents. A cohort of 11 superintendents and 9 assistant superintendents was formed, facilitating both role specific and mixed small group discussions. The group met four times during the year for two half-days and an evening session. Four resource persons were chosen to share their views of the implications and challenges of ethical leadership for superintendents and to lead a portion of the session.

The first was Dr. Chris Kelly, then Superintendent of the Vancouver School District, followed by Dr. Robert Starratt of Boston University whose book and articles grew to be central to the cohort's work, followed by a session



The biggest single plus of the cohort model has been the opportunity for sustained dialogue and interaction with a group of people trying to do this job in the Manitoba context.
– (participant)

led by Dr. Jon Young of the University of Manitoba to extend Starratt's work to the level of division-wide ethical leadership and, finally, a session with Penny Milton, Executive Director of the Canadian Education Association, who facilitated the discussion that among other things led to a first draft of Principles of Ethical Leadership. Dr. Young also served as the cohort's Critical Friend throughout all four sessions.

In order that leadership be shared by as many cohort members as possible, three members planned and facilitated each of the sessions which were a combination of small and large, hetero- and homogeneous (in terms of position) groupings, with some presentation and much interaction. Each speaker forwarded readings for advance preparation, and members were asked to consider writing reflections after each session. For the first session, participants were asked to come ready to share an ethical dilemma they were dealing with on the job, and these were initially shared in small, homogeneous groups.

The stated intentions of the program were to provide a forum for participants to engage collectively in an ongoing inquiry into their practice, to provide the opportunity for reflection on the moral imperative of leadership, and to positively affect the culture of leadership in schools and divisions across the province. A survey, focus groups and written reflections by participants indicate that our attempt to create a community of school leaders engaged in dialogue around the ethical dilemmas that characterize their work met with success.

One participant said, "this is the best learning experience I've had since my Master's program." Another said, "This is a rare opportunity. In thirty years as an educator, this is the first time I've come to 'this place.'" All participants attested to being more conscious of the principles of ethics and moral reasoning in their daily work and they spoke of other gains as well: sharpened tools of analysis using the ethics lens; increased comfort, confidence, courage and wellness; a heightened awareness of the value of their colleagues in their learning, and even changes in their practice.

Ultimately it was not, they felt, about them, but about the wider system for which they have considerable responsibility: "the discussions and questions posed at our sessions have more deeply instilled in me the importance of creating a 'shared ethics' within our school division in order to positively promote change."

What made the program work?

What was it about this program that led most participants to rate it "very high" among their professional learning experiences and *all* to recommend that the program be repeated for a new cohort? The following aspects of the program were named by participants as key:

Dialogue with a cohort of colleagues over time. "Deeply engaged" was a term used to describe the experience of the 24-hour sessions; "To have this long to probe and clarify things is so helpful." The opportunity to reflect, listen to others, and engage in critical thinking took people beyond simply developing relationships to a "new level of thinking, theorizing, envisioning;" "There is tremendous power in this approach."

The second most vital feature was the format of small and large group interaction which established trust and a sense of community. As one participant wrote, "it is important to have a safe environment for conversations of this nature." The ample opportunity to talk allowed these discussions to test, extend, and concretize ideas from the resource people reframed for the Manitoba context.

The value of the group discussions was even more important than the contribution of the "presenters," indicated by the frequency with which this networking aspect was mentioned:

> *It proved that we are able to provide our own professional development at a very high level. We made good use of the expertise within our group and made judicious decisions when we felt we needed the wisdom of the larger educational leadership community.*

And finally, one said, "This cohort and the model work because people are willing to share and leave individual egos at the door. I can't say enough about the group."

Quality of the resource people and readings. The contribution of Kelly, Starratt, Young and Milton were absolutely central to this experience:

> *The intimacy and immediacy of having a top quality facilitator work directly with a small group like ours is second to none. The chance to have him share his stories in person and the ability to interact with him, both verbally and in thought, is very powerful. The way the group then responded and began to follow the lead, opening up, sharing stories and becoming vulnerable to colleagues—that is not possible in any other setting.*

Every respondent made reference in their surveys to the excellence of the resource people, the usefulness of their perceptions, theoretical material and readings, the presence of which one called "critical to the process."

Embedded in practice. The cohort appreciated the contributions of the resource people for the practical connection that was always maintained to their work in their school divisions. The best PD, they claimed, is "embedded in our work," about which "people talked so constructively." People spoke of ideas for new initiatives and the solving of issues being taken back for "better decisions" in the division: "I've come away from each session better at my job because I've taken back new ideas about what to do about some sticky situations."

Focus on Ethical Leadership. The theme of Ethical Leadership seemed to strike the right chord with the cohort. One participant said, "The focus on ethics was fabulous, and just trying to use that thinking to approach what we do has been extremely beneficial." Others found the focus on ethical leadership to be "appropriate," a topic they were "interested in," or which seemed "foundational" to their work, while a few mentioned that the power was more in the model than dependent on the focus ("the format worked well and would work well no matter what the topic was"). The fact that the focus group discussions, reflections, and survey responses were concerned so overwhelmingly with issues of ethics suggests that the topic reaches

through to the very ground of both the personal and professional lives of superintendents.

Having a Critical Friend as part of the group. The presence of a critical friend from the Faculty provided the opportunity for some academic continuity from session to session with many members of the group expressing their gratitude to Dr. Young for providing this component as well as occasionally pushing the discussion beyond the experiential to a more reflective, analytical level.

> *The notion of a critical friend is a really good thing to have, someone who can kind of feed things back to us, ask a probing question, make a comment. I like being pushed a bit.*

The future

When asked "Can you see ways this model could be used in other contexts or for other jurisdictions," all respondents said *yes* and a majority spoke of the appropriateness of the model for leadership programs. Many elaborated with comments such as "we are hoping to use the model for our regional leadership program," or "I already use this for leadership development in my own division; it is a powerful model for just about any group." And some extended the idea to other groups:

> *I think that this model could be used at multiple levels and for other jurisdictions—from teachers to resource teachers to guidance counsellors to principals to division administrators to provincial leaders. I also think it would be valuable to do some cross-jurisdictional PD using this model. A crucial part of the learning is developing deeper understanding of all of the workings of the larger system and this would be a great way to do this.*

MASS has organized a second cohort, with 22 participants (again with a balance of urban/rural, male/female, superintendent/assistant superintendent), for the school year 2009-2010. The fact that participants in the first year's cohort have organized themselves to continue to meet during the coming year is perhaps the strongest indication of not only a need among superintendents for this kind of professional learning but also of the strength of this particular model, which makes possible the kind of learning that, in Starratt's words, is both "humanly fulfilling and socially responsible." Such learning surely is a good thing for individual superintendents, their divisions and the organization, but also for education in the province. ■

Coralie Bryant, Executive Director of MASS, was a member of the first cohort.

Footnotes

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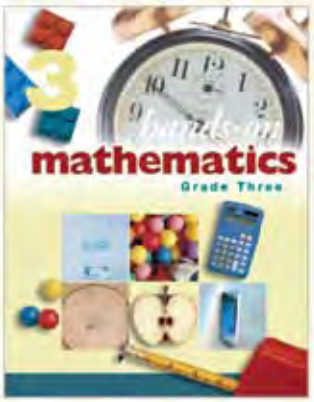

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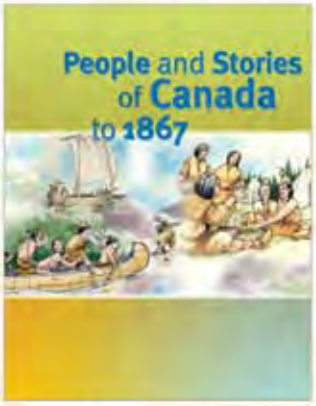

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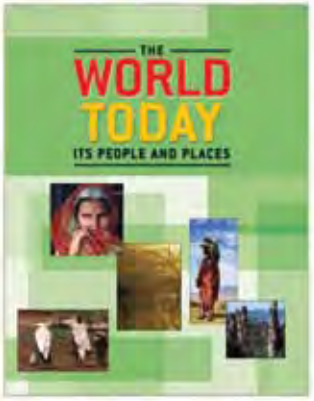

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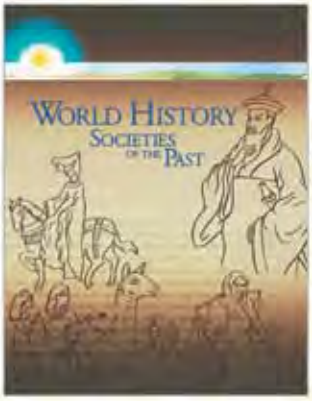

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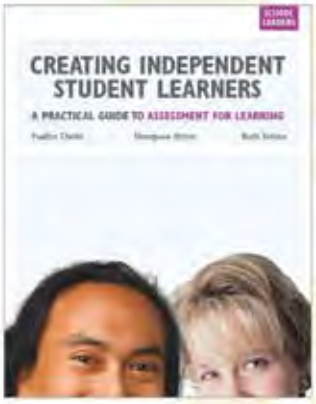

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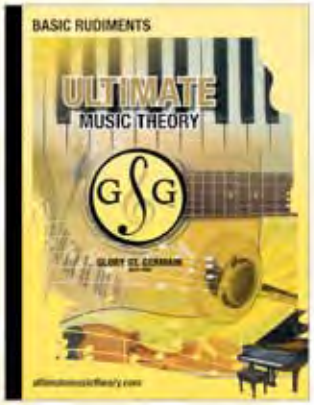

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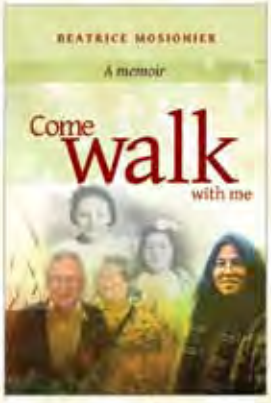

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