



making connections

a People for Education conference on education

Saturday, November 8, 2008, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
York University, Toronto
Stong College Dining Room

Agenda

8:00 Registration table open

9:00 Introductions and Opening remarks by Annie Kidder

10:00 Coffee break

10:15 Workshop and Discussion Sessions

- *Panel Discussion:* Do marks really matter?
- *Panel Discussion:* The changing role of principals
- The 'balanced day': what is it and how is it working?
- School accommodation reviews: a survival guide
- The Parent Inclusion Initiative: sharing what we've learned
- School councils: challenges & solutions
- e-learning: the pros, the cons, and new advances

11:45 Lunch and informal discussion tables

1:00 Keynote address: **Dr. Michael Tymchak**, *Dean of Education, University of Regina, and chair of the School^{PLUS} task force, a program that is transforming Saskatchewan schools*

2:10 Workshop and Discussion Sessions

- *Panel Discussion:* All-day kindergarten: why do we need it and what will it look like?
- *Panel Discussion:* Schools at the centre of their communities
- Transforming urban schools and communities – programs that really work
- What the heck is DPA and how do we get our kids moving more?
- School councils: challenges & solutions
- Special education: the challenges and benefits of integration
- Parent Involvement Committees: making PICs really work for parents

3:45 Address by the Minister of Education

Introduction by Associate Dean Don Diplo, Faculty of Education, York University

4:30 Reception (tea & coffee, snacks, cash bar)

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2008 Conference *Session Descriptions*

MORNING SESSIONS: 10:15 - 11:45 *(sessions subject to change)*

Panel Discussion: Do marks really matter?

Stong Dining Room

What do grades mean? More important, what should they mean? Should they be emphasized in our schools as much as they are? Does a grade reflect whether or not the student has actually learned anything? How does parents' and students' obsession with 'good' marks affect the process of learning? Are there better ways to assess students' learning?

- James Côté, *Department of Sociology, University of Western Ontario*
- Sharon Friesen, *Faculty of Education, University of Calgary*

Moderator: Cyndie Jacobs, Director, Curriculum & Assessment, Ontario Teachers' Federation

Panel Discussion: The changing role of principals

Master's Dining Room

Over the last two decades, the role of principals has been re-defined. More and more administrative work has been downloaded to the school level, steering principals away from their traditional focus as 'Lead Teacher' to the job of managers of schools. And there has been a surge in retirements among principals, removing many experienced mentors from the field. What is the impact on our schools and our children?

- Debbie Smith, *Principal, Forest Manor Public School, Toronto*
- Jan Coomber, *former secondary school principal, Peel District School Board*
- Michael Fullan, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, author of "What's Worth Fighting for in the Principalship?"*

Moderator: Annie Kidder, Executive Director, People for Education

Workshop: The Balanced Day: what is it and how is it working?

Room 303

The Balanced School Day (BSD) is a different way of organizing the school day schedule. It includes three extended blocks of teaching time, interspersed with two 40-50 minute breaks (instead of a lunch break and two recess breaks). At least 13 Ontario school boards have implemented this new scheduling, and three boards have conducted studies of the Balanced School Day method. Why are boards doing this? Does it affect kids' learning? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

- Trisha Woehrle, *Research Consultant, Hamilton-Wentworth DSB*
- Michele Stairs, *History professor at Niagara College, and parent, Niagara Catholic DSB*

Moderator: John Hoffman, Writer, Today's Parent, and parent, Kawartha-Pine Ridge DSB

Workshop: School accommodation reviews – a survival guide Room 224

School accommodation reviews are becoming a fact of life all over the province as school populations decrease because of demographic and social changes. We'll take a look at the process for accommodation reviews – what makes them work, what are the pitfalls, and what are the range of outcomes possible from the reviews. In this landscape, how do we survive the reviews and achieve the best outcomes?

- Peter Gooch, *Director of Strategy, Policy, and Accountability, Toronto District School Board*
- Catherine Fife, *Vice-President, Ontario Public School Boards' Assn.; Trustee, Waterloo RDSB*
- Kathy Wilcox, *Parent, Near North District School Board*

Moderator: Ruth Baumann, former Secretary/Treasurer of the Ontario Teachers' Federation

Workshop: The Parent Inclusion Initiative: sharing what we've learned Room 218

When parents are involved in their children's education, they feel more connected to their community, their children's chances for success are improved, and schools are richer for parents' participation. But being involved is not easy for all parents. To address the challenges many parents face, over the past three years People for Education's *Parent Inclusion Initiative* has been developing information for parents in many languages, partnering with community agencies, and offering workshops to help parents better understand the education system and their role in it. In this workshop we will share what we have learned and ask participants to share their own challenges and successes. All the ideas will become part of a *Parent Inclusion Resource Manual*, available in the new year to schools, community organizations and settlement workers.

- Jacqui Stachan, *Parent Inclusion Co-ordinator, People for Education*

Moderator: Huma Nauman, Settlement Education Partnerships Toronto

Workshop: School councils: problems and solutions Room 222

School councils are one way that parents can use their skills and experience to support their children's school. In this workshop, we will discuss solutions to perennial issues such as promoting participation among parents, working successfully with principals, control over monies fundraised, and making council concerns known at the school board and provincial level. Bring your school council challenges to this workshop, and share what works in your school.

- Joanne MacEwan, *Chair, Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Parents Association*

Moderator: Monique St. Aude, Teacher candidate, York University Faculty of Education

Workshop: E-learning: the pros, the cons, and new advances Room 216

As enrolment declines, small high schools, particularly those in the north and rural areas, face the challenge of limited course choices and fewer teachers. As a result, smaller secondary schools are increasingly relying on the internet and things like video-conferencing. These tools give students access to a wider variety of course choices and learning options. But are they as effective as face-to-face classroom teaching? Do students feel as engaged when they are unable to talk to other students or meet their teacher face to face? How can we use e-learning tools more effectively and how can we ensure they are student-friendly?

- Clare Brett, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*
- Travis McArthur, *student, formerly in the Superior-Greenstone DSB*
- Ron St. Louis, *e-learning Ontario, Ministry of Education*
- Kellie Weir-Burt, *Teacher, Upper Canada District School Board*

Moderator: Pinky McRae, Provincial Parent Board

AFTERNOON SESSIONS: 2:10 - 3:40

Panel Discussion: All-day kindergarten: why do we need it and what will it look like?

Stong Dining Room

Last November, the government appointed an advisor to recommend the best way to implement full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. The province cited a Rutgers University study which showed that four-year-olds in full-time learning programs scored consistently higher in math and language skills, and that full-time learning has dramatic and lasting effects on children's education. How will we accommodate a full-day early learning program in our schools? What role will childcare play? Why does Finland – arguably the most successful education system in the world – start formal education at the age of 7?

- Jane Bertrand, *Coordinator of Research for the Early Years Study 2*
- David Clegg, *President, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario*
- Jenny Robinson, *Executive Director, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care*

Moderator: Alejandra Bravo, Maytree Foundation

Panel Discussion: Schools at the centre

Master's Dining Room

Strong accessible public schools linked to strong communities provide every student with an equitable opportunity to develop the imagination, the skills and the sense of citizenship necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st century. In this workshop, we are going to spark some new thinking about education: What defines a truly successful school and a truly successful education system? What do schools look like if they really are centres of their communities? How can we use our schools to transform our communities? This workshop launches a province-wide initiative that will engage parents, students and school communities in developing new models for schools that work in the 21st century.

- Annie Kidder, *Executive Director, People for Education*
- Michelle Goldberg, *Researcher-in-Residence, People for Education*

Moderator: Marie-France LeFort, consultant, Protem (former manager of the Parent Engagement Office at the Ministry of Education.)

Workshop: Transforming urban schools and communities – programs that really work

Room 218

Some boards are targeting low-performing schools with specific strategies like mentors, teacher training and close tracking of the most challenged students. These initiatives are intended to increase community participation, student attendance, and student success. Find out more about these strategies, how they can transform a school, and how they contribute to student success. Could these strategies help your school?

- Carl James, *Urban Diversity program, Faculty of Education, York University*
- Cassie Bell, *Inner City Advisory Committee Co-ordinator*
- Jan Coomber, *former secondary school principal, Peel District Board of Education*

Moderator: Jehad Aleweiwi, Executive Director, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

Workshop: What is DPA and how do we get our kids moving more?

Room 222

Ontario's childhood obesity statistics are alarming. At the same time, children's obsession with video games and television is resulting in little or no active play. The province has introduced mandatory Daily Physical Activity (DPA) in elementary schools. Is it working? What are communities doing? What can parents do? This workshop will provide practical ideas and strategies to take back to your school.

This session was made possible through funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario

- Jennifer Cowie Bonne, *Director of Marketing & Development, OPHEA*
- Janine Dunlop, *Play in Bruce Grey, Ministries of Health Promotion and Culture*
- Farooq Shabbar, *Principal, John McCrae Public School, York Region DSB*
- Myra Stephen, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy, Ministry of Education*

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(repeat of morning session)

- Aimee Gerdevich, *Provincial Parent Board*

Moderator: Colin Husbands, Inner City Schools Coalition

Workshop: Special education: the challenges and benefits of integration

Room 224

The trend over the past several years has been to integrate special needs students into regular classrooms. Integrated classes reflect the diversity of society and have been beneficial in many ways to students. On the other hand, some parents and educators are concerned that integration creates new challenges in the classroom, saying that sometimes it affects the teacher's ability to provide sufficient support. How can we make integration work? Are there enough supports in place? Are there times when congregated special needs classes work better?

- Charlene Carruthers, *Special Education teacher, Toronto DSB; Council for Exceptional Children*
- Bruce Drewett, *former Director of the Special Education Policy & Programs Branch, Ministry of Education*
- Diane Wagner, *Public Policy & Client Services Coordinator, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario*

Moderator: Gay Stephenson, Research Director, People for Education

Workshop: Parent Involvement Committees: making PICs really work for parents

Room 303

In 2005, the province required school boards to establish board level Parent Involvement Committees (PICs). PICs vary greatly from board to board, in both their make-up and their function. Find out what different PICS are doing and share your ideas about how to make them work better. Should there be province-wide terms of reference for PICS or should each board develop their own?

- Kevin Larson, *Parent and member of the Bluewater DSB PIC*
- Wanda Percival, *Parent Engagement Office*
- Sheila Stewart, *Lakehead Council of School Council Chairs*

Moderator: Jacqui Strachan, Parent Support Co-ordinator, People for Education