



Leadership Making a Difference

As usual, directors of education have been busy getting the school year underway. The opening has been very positive across the province and all look forward to a challenging year of learning.

Since our August meeting, a number of board program highlights and director initiatives have come to my attention and I thought I would share this information with you. This is just a sampling of boards and others will be featured in next issue.

- ❖ The Peel DSB has introduced Welcome Centres for families and students new to the area. They are funded by agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The board also offers an Academy for International Students.
- ❖ On August 20-21 the Peel board held a summer session on Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age focusing on 21st century pedagogy. 550 attended.
- ❖ Dufferin Peel CDSB provided a Get Ready for Secondary Program and a Link Crew Transition program for 3400 students in August.
- ❖ John Malloy was featured in an interview by Globe Now regarding the technological revolution in Canada' schools and how it is forming the modern classroom.
- ❖ The Ottawa CDSB website has a Good News blog featuring inspiring stories from school communities which deals with positive staff and student initiatives.
- ❖ Jim Costello in Lambton Kent DSB has introduced a three year Technology Enriched Learning Plan aimed at modernizing pedagogy across the board.
- ❖ David Thomas continues to produce Whitewater and Leadership as a blog on the Upper Canada DSB website. He has also sent a letter to the Deputy Minister summarizing the Upper Canada initiative for student well-being which serves as a comprehensive board model.
- ❖ Many board websites are providing detailed updates on EQAO results with emphasis on the positive results for grades 3 and 6.

Current Initiatives by Council of Ontario Directors of Education

1. CODE Consortium for System Leadership and Innovation

CODE has developed a *Consortium for System Leadership* and Innovation and recognizes the importance of building connections among and within school boards, researchers and the Ministry of Education. Ten district school boards are involved actively.

The ten Consortium school boards were part of the CODE Special Education Leadership Project (2005-2008) that supported system leaders in improving learning for students with diverse learning needs including special education needs. During that time, a significant body of knowledge related to promising practices for special education programs and services, program and system leadership was developed.

For three years, the ten school boards funded, informed, and supported a research project that focused on the work of the CODE special education project. The research study was conducted by Andy Hargreaves and Henry Braun of Boston College. The final report of that study is entitled, *Leading for All: A research report of the development, design, implementation and impact of Ontario's "Essential for Some, Good for All" initiative*.

The primary purpose of the Consortium is to advance the philosophy of ESGA; increase understanding of the concept of “leading from the middle” that emerged during the ESGA project; and to influence and support the direction of system leadership activities within and across districts in Ontario as we move forward with leadership and innovation.

Throughout the next two years, the CODE Consortium will be engaged in an inquiry-based process to deepen and advance understanding of “Leading from the Middle” at the district, regional and provincial levels. The CODE Consortium will collaborate with researchers, the Ministry of Education and other school boards to explore specific issues related to: leadership development, alignment of special education, board improvement planning and other key provincial initiatives, instructional interventions.

The project begins in the fall of 2014 with the identification of the ten projects to be undertaken by each of the Consortium boards. Included in the deliverables of the research component are a further refinement of the definition and application of LFTM within the context of *The Ontario Leadership Framework* that will be shared with all district school boards in the province

The CODE Consortium is holding a session on Tuesday, October 28 at the Intercontinental Hotel on Bloor Street in Toronto. It will feature a keynote by Andy Hargreaves and presentations by leaders from the ten boards in the Consortium.

2. High Performing School Districts

On another front, CODE and IEL are working through Ken Leithwood and Catherine McCullough to study and implement the features of high performing school districts. Ken and Catherine are developing a series of case studies and professional development training sessions for senior administrators. Their work, centred in district school boards emphasizes the importance of the leadership of Superintendents, Directors and Principals in developing a culture that supports initiative and implementation of innovation.

Michael Fullan, in continuing to elaborate effective change methods, supports this concept of Leading From the Middle and will focus on it in his next book.

3. CODE Directors Study Group

At the summer meeting of CODE in 2014, a session featuring Sir Michael Barber and moderated by Michael Fullan, emphasized that effective system change will come with consistent input from the roles of those in the centre (middle). They stated, “Excellent work depends on partnerships. Develop the group to move the group.”

For the past three years, CODE has put directors in contact with international education perspective at their August session in an attempt to broaden the framework for system planning. In 2012 the contact was with Andreas Schleicher of OECD with a summary of future trends in international education and assessment. In 2013, the presenter was Jennifer Riel of York University on the topic of leadership through Integrative Thinking. This year, Sir Michael Barber emphasized the value of developing quality Innovation.

CODE has been fortunate to have funding assistance from Pearson Publishing in acquiring these leading presenters. As follow-up and continuing the initiative for instructional change and contemporary learning we are already working on next initiatives for the group.

The CODE executive works with an internal study group to structure the on-going awareness and planning for directors with the belief that directors have the expertise and capacity to move the Ontario system forward and utilize best practices found locally and internationally.

- The study group is led currently by co-chairs Martyn Becket, Julian Hanlon, and Lyse-Anne Papineau who represent the Public, Catholic and French CEOs. Participation is open to all Directors.
- The director study group partners with CODE by providing sessions twice a year and develops its agenda with the CODE Planning Committee.
- Based on feedback from the previous session, they develop a framework for the next session agenda.
- The co-chairs critically review the detailed agenda, distribute the agenda to the members, co-chair the session, and ensure follow through.

4. 21st Century Innovation Research Initiative (Phase 3)

CODE is working now with the Ministry in coordinating multiple projects in the 21st Century Innovation Research Initiative. The focus of these 79 projects, in every district school board in Ontario, is “a rethinking of visions for changing delivery of learning.”

Projects emphasize the advancement of innovative technology-enabled teaching and learning practices. A very significant research component of this project will gather insights into the enhancement of instruction with technology and examples of strategies for systemic change of instruction and learning.

CODE and the Ministry of Education are committed to mobilizing the knowledge and effective practices evident in these projects. The lessons drawn are consistent with international findings and directions.

The research applied to these board projects will capture the best of what is happening in boards and make best practices available to all district school boards.

On October 23 a symposium will be held in Toronto to feature the interim learnings from these projects and to observe directions going forward. This will be a very valuable session for board teams.

Directors of Education are pivotal to making change in school systems through their commitment and leadership. They influence practice and theory through their initiatives and support.

5. **Another area where CODE has been highly involved is in the ensuring of safe practices in technology and science labs in our schools. Working with the Ministry and the Ministry of Labour, CODE has established a provincial Health and Safety Team representing expertise in the area of science and technology within school settings.**

The Safety team has produced four professional development modules and accompanying e-learning materials for boards to use with administrative staff having responsibility for school and classroom safety. Awareness sessions have been held across the province.

CODE continues its work in health and safety assisting the ministry in ensuring that citations have been remedied and steps are taken to prevent future accidents. Directors of education have shown leadership in every board to implement safety measures and provide for student safety.

Through all of these actions noted here and many others, CODE is attempting to effect change that will foster the improvement and enhancement of better delivery of instruction and learning across the province. It is the leadership of the senior officials, directors of education and superintendents, that is a common thread in the improvement of learning opportunities in Ontario.

I welcome your comments and suggestions for how CODE can build on these initiatives.

Frank Kelly
September 2014