

# Quest Journal – Volume 5

## Volume 5

### **Using an Equity Lens: A Guide to Creating Equitable and Inclusive School Environments**

Author: Gail Belisario, Judith Ngan

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to a vision of All Students Achieving Their Full Potential. As guided by the HWDSB Strategic Directions of Achievement Matters, Engagement Matters, and Equity Matters, the HWDSB Equity Policy (Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, n.d.) provides a framework for our Board to work towards creating safe and inclusive learning environments, identifying and removing barriers throughout the organization, providing learning experiences that meet the needs of all students, and facilitating meaningful parent and community involvement. This focus places a high regard and responsibility for both system and schools to commit to a School Effectiveness Framework (Ontario Ministry of Education 2010) in which strategic planning and successful practice take into consideration all diversity factors and by embedding principles of equity and inclusive education into all aspects of the learning environment to support student achievement. (Ontario Ministry of Education 2009b). This article discusses how the HWDSB document Using an Equity Lens: A Guide to Creating Equitable and Inclusive School Environments (Wright, Scime & McLeod 2009) supports the implementation of the HWDSB Equity Policy, and how it can be used as a tool to assist schools in embedding the principles of equity and inclusion in its practice.

Keywords: equity and inclusion, school effectiveness framework, student achievement, school climate, leadership,

community partnerships, curriculum, student

## **Transforming Communities: Technologies for Teaching and Learning Endangered Languages**

Author: Professor Tania M. Ka'ai and Professor John C. Moorfield

Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Māori is one of three official languages of the country, but is not compulsory in schools. Only 4% of Aotearoa/New Zealand's total population of around 4 million can speak Māori and only 23% of Maori are fluent in the language (Te Puni Ka kiri, 2008). Even this percentage of fluent speakers has been questioned by Bauer (2008) as being inflated and not indicative of the number of speakers who actually use the language (p. 63).

With the development of computers, the World Wide Web, smart phones, devices such as the iPad and iPod Touch and the use of Smart Boards and video conferencing, there is a wonderful opportunity to make the learning and teaching of second languages much more interesting, accessible and effective. Importantly, the opportunities for indigenous people to record, develop, disseminate and learn their respective languages and cultures are also increasing and provide new avenues to promote those languages and cultures. There is an opportunity to create innovative resources that will engage and inspire learners to learn endangered languages.

Keywords: endangered languages, technology, Māori, language acquisition, language teaching, digital literacy

### **Why is Student Engagement Important?**

Author: Dawn Lane

Before attempting to answer, allow me to introduce myself and establish my perspective on this vital question. My name is Dawn Lane and I am a SERT at Oak Ridges Public School in Richmond Hill. I work in a community that has a diverse

student population, with some families that have plenty and others who have need. Our school council runs a snack program to ensure that every student has access to healthy food to fuel his or her growing body and brain. Engagement requires the mind to be turned on. Engagement is something that can be measured. Our measure of student engagement is coloured by our background, our outlook and by our philosophies as educators.

Keywords: student engagement, special education, technology, collaboration, fundraising  
**The First Nations Kindergarten Transition Program in York Region: Action Research in Students Achieving Outstanding Social and Academic Success in Full Day Kindergarten**

Author: Tanya Leary

Historically, schools in First Nation communities, have not included positive experiences for their students. Fortunately, the world is finally discovering the truth behind the Residential School and Indian Day School Experiences. Looking toward the future, however, provides excitement and encouragement as First Nation communities, schools and students begin their educational journey forward. York Region District School Board continues to house the only, 'Indian Day School' in the area, located on Georgina Island, in the heart of Lake Simcoe. It was only four years ago that the official school name and government documents were changed from the Georgina Island Indian Day School, to Waabgon Gamig First Nation School, which simply means, Blossoming House. This article includes a glimpse of student life, cultural norms, professional practice, and perhaps a solution to increasing academic success for students in First Nations schools, and possibly every Early-Learning Kindergarten Program in the province. The answer lies within a special little program called, The Junior Kindergarten Transition Program.

Keywords: first nations communities, residential schools, Indian Day Schools, first nations schools, equity, cultural

## identity, junior kindergarten transition program **Engaging Minority Parents**

Author: Denise Mabee

The intent of this paper is to examine the importance of engaging minority parents in partnership with Ontario's education system. Historically, minority parents have been an underestimated source of knowledge, a relatively quiet resource from which the education system would greatly benefit. Through a practical perspective of the Ministry's Parent Engagement and Equity documents, I will be addressing the following questions: How has parental involvement evolved through the Ministry's perspective? Why are minority parents typically remaining silent? What concerns do minority parents generally have about their children's education, in particular Native American Indians and African Americans? How can schools encourage these groups to share their voice through parental engagement? Ministry documents, personal experiences as well as leading sources on parenting in education, such as Debbie Pushor and Joyce Epstein, will be cited to help support the ideas raised in this paper. With the influx of new immigrants into Ontario's schools, it's imperative that the education system move with the developing trends and adjust to differing school needs. The Ministry is well on their way to making this happen with their new policies entitled 'Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy' and 'Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools.'

Keywords: parent engagement, diverse communities, immigration, parent involvement, social capital **Showing the Talk: How Artifacts Contribute to Inclusive Schools/Workplaces**

Author: Kevin McBean

A quick review of district websites reveals mission, vision and value statements laden with words related to student achievement, well-being, equity, inclusion and engagement.

This is the 'talk.' But 'the talk' is meaningless without 'the walk,' that being the enactment of such values in behaviour, communication and decision making. I think we can all agree that we would like 'the walk' to match 'the talk,' but it must be recognized that this does not always happen and certainly will not happen consistently by chance. Rather, it is through complex and highly variable processes that participants in a school system, the those students, staff, or the community, come to understand the organization's values and then based on the individual's understanding and personal alignment with them, subsequently act upon them. These processes are identified as organizational socialization. While I have posed that we as educational leaders value 'the talk' I would also posit that education systems have considerable reason to more implicitly address organizational socialization given the continuous intake of students of all ages and abilities, and the many anticipated changes in staff groups as a result of expected, as per demographic research, retirements. Those whose values do not align with the organization generally fail to engage, and will physically or mentally leave the organization over time on their own accord or as result of the actions of others.

Keywords: organizations, structures, artifacts, internal vs external influences **How can teachers access the brain's learning processes in second language acquisition and use the information effectively and practically?**

Author: Maria Merecoulias

This paper will focus on the cerebrum. Memory and learning occur within this area, but are independent of one another. Learning is defined as 'a process that will modify a subsequent behaviour' Whereas memory is defined as 'the ability to remember past experiences.' To understand this in terms of language: You learn a new language by studying it, but you then speak it by using your memory to retrieve the words that you have learned. Therefore memory is the record

left by learning. Memory depends on learning: learning depends on memory. Memory allows the linkage of knowledge which is integral to learning. You can more easily remember something you learned by linking it to something you already know.

Keywords: memory, brain based learning, English Language Learners, language acquisition, amygdala, making connections, introvert/extrovert  
**The Hidden Curriculum Teaching Model/Learning Model**

Author: Priscilla Mochrie

Mountain View Elementary School is nestled in the village of Stoney Creek, within Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. The school welcomes about 350 students in grades junior kindergarten through Grade 8. Approximately 60 per cent of the student population is South Asian, creating a climate within the school that speaks to diversity. I began as principal at Mountain View in the fall of 2008. At the time, demographics had been consistent for a number of years, and most of the staff had taught at the school for a number of years. The predominant style of instruction was teacher directed, with students sitting in rows. Classroom management was effective, the school community strived for academic excellence, and staff and students appeared comfortable. The role of teacher began to change during the past three years with the implementation of the School Effectiveness Framework. An ongoing Teaching-Learning Critical Pathway was also woven throughout the school year, ensuring that our program delivery reflected continuous growth. The teacher's role is now one of facilitator, as teachers strive to increase student engagement, ultimately increasing student success.

Keywords: School Effectiveness Framework, Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, bias, ladder of inference, team building, community building, social justice, school improvement  
**A Road of Reform Well Travelled**

Author: Beate Planche

During the last decade, in a similar fashion to other school systems in Ontario, York Region District School Board educators have been involved in many professional conversations about how to best improve and reform elementary and secondary schools. With the benefit of dedicated investments and professional learning supports by the Ontario Ministry of Education, significant gains in provincial achievement in reading, writing and mathematics have been made.

As importantly, as a part of a collective quest to develop relevant 21st century learning environments, our professional conversations are increasingly focused on how to deeply engage students as partners in learning. Knowing our learners well is our beginning point for using data to define and respond with appropriate instruction. An appropriate beginning point is essential if we are to truly personalize educational practice and achieve our goals for an equitable educational experience for each student.

Keywords: equity of achievement, special education, mental health, learning disabilities, professional learning, 4Cs, co-planning, co-teaching, co-debriefing, co-reflecting, teacher leadership

**The Fifth Business of educational improvement: Leadership for equitable and inclusive schools**

Author: Malcolm J. Richmon

Undertaking a literature review on leadership in education is, at best, an act of scholarly bravery, but less charitably, an act of considerable foolhardiness. With well over a century of academic writing to draw on, the literature isn't simply voluminous, it's all but insurmountable. Further still, the literature itself is so varied, and the conceptual features of leadership so widely disputed, that there is very little assurance that different inquiries into leadership are even

studying the same phenomenon. In an attempt to be as inclusive as possible, Yukl (1998) suggests that leadership involves processes of influence between leaders and followers, but even this seemingly benign generalization has become increasingly challenged by some of the newer directions in the field, as we will see in the pages that follow. Given the facile usage of some of the most fundamentally important terms in the field "leadership, administration, and management" with less attention or concern than we might reasonably expect regarding the conceptual nuances of each, it's hardly surprising that effective knowledge mobilization to support systematic efforts to improve schools and school systems can be challenging.

Keywords: leadership, capacity building, distributed leadership  
**Sports And Academic Achievement**

Author: Rajesh Singh

The link between athleticism and academic performance has always been an area where educators are keen to investigate. Knowing whether students benefit from the impact of sports involvement is a huge advantage in engaging learners from a variety of backgrounds. In doing a recent literature review I have found that students who are involved in sports benefit in a variety of ways, not only academically through increased grade point averages (GPA) but through greater school involvement, better self-esteem and social skills.

Keywords: athletics and academics, sports centred schools, social benefits  
**Creating Our Future**

Author: Karen Steffensen

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) provides insight into the power of voice and how an empowerment model of participation enhances people's belief in their ability to change their own lives. As Principal, my desire was to transform the culture of the school from one where students from the Sechelt Nation seemed disconnected and

disenfranchised from the teaching and learning to one where they felt honored and connected to their past traditions and empowered in their ability to seek new pathways for their future.

Keywords: first nations, first language instruction, student voice, local autonomy, community engagement, partnerships, collective responsibility, co-creation, constructionism, innovation, transformation, governance

**The Power of Play: Using the Integrated Play Group Model to Enhance Motor and Social Skills for Learners with Autism**

Author: Alison Tonks, Dave Sandiford, Andrea Keddy, Amy Getzler

Teacher Inquiry Question: How can we use the Integrated Play Group model (IPG) to enhance the gross motor and social skill development of our Primary and Junior Autism Community Classroom learners? Our action research team consisted of teachers who all had preparation coverage in our school's Primary and Junior Autism Community Classes and the home room teacher of the Junior Autism Class. Faced with the challenge of working in a classroom where we had a wide range of experience, it gave us the opportunity to collaborate and embark on our action research journey. We saw a gap in the inclusion of our Community Class learners into our overall Healthy Active Living school initiative. A school community can be judged on its inclusivity based on how its most vulnerable members are treated and integrated. We decided that this was an area that needed some improvement.

Keywords: autism, community class, social skills, gross motor skills, Canadian Sport for Life, active play, increased dialogue

**Cultural Responsiveness as a Component of Conflict Management in Secondary Schools**

Author: Rosemarie Walker

Current conflict management practice in public schools seldom

reflects the varied worldviews and backgrounds of disputants, nor does it often address the causes of conflicts. In increasingly diverse North American communities, this often results in disproportionate numbers of marginalized students being suspended and expelled. Research was conducted in a south central Ontario school board to examine the conflict management practice of secondary school administrators. The language of cultural proficiency was used as a framework to describe what respectful attention to cultural diversity might look and sound like in the management of student conflicts at school.

Keywords: cultural, responsiveness, conflict management