Quest Journal — Volume 8

The Quest Journal, Volume 8 — The Quest for Increased Student Achievement and Well-Being: Re-Imagining Public Education

It is with much pleasure and anticipation that we introduce Volume 8 of The Quest for Improved Student Achievement: A Journal of Educational Inquiry and Practice. This Journal is aimed at capturing examples of current understandings about what it takes, collectively and individually, to improve student achievement and well-being. It provides a forum for sharing articles, images and research carried out within our system and beyond as we focus on our common goal of positively impacting the learning of all our students. From our beginnings in Volume 1, this Journal has been an annual effort tied to the theme of The Quest Conference for each year. All articles are available and accessible online at www.yrdsb.ca/questjournal.

This year's Quest focuses on the theme of Mobilizing Sustainable Improvement and reflects on the innovative and high-performing global practice that sustains improvement and inspires learning in the process. It marks the next step in the evolution of our Quest Conferences held in the York Region District School Board. It is an opportunity for us to learn together about what it takes, worldwide, to increase student achievement and well-being. The Quest Conference is designed to have us deliberately pause and reflect on our collective journey and to learn from those who are making a positive impact on students and their learning. The insights gleaned and the reflections inspired will be relevant for all students, staff and stakeholders comprising our education system.

We are grateful to those who have contributed and hope that readers find the articles and videos thought-provoking and interesting. I invite all readers to engage in the dialogue,

share the learning and create the next chapter in their improvement journey.

This year's Quest Journal also owes much to the persistence and hard work of the Quest Journal Committee members: Dr. Debbie Donsky, Clelia Della Rovere, Lynne Hollingshead, Nada Aoudeh, David Hung and Melissa Murray. Additionally, I would like to thank Dawn Clayden, Lisa Gibson and Steve Rutledge from Public Affairs and Communications and Information Technology Services, Stuart Gerskup from the Learning, Design & Development Team, and Visual Art Consultant Will Lottering for their contributions to the journal. I am sincerely grateful for their creativity and unwavering commitment to this task.

While previous versions have been posted online, they have not been interactive in nature; nor have they afforded opportunity for input and information exchange as this year's Journal will provide. Needless to say, this takes time and effort and commitment to compile — especially when it is being done on a voluntary basis in addition to regular assignments. Like all improvement efforts here in Ontario and beyond — our work in York Region is challenging. Improving the processes of learning, teaching and leadership demands steadfast teamwork, collaboration and willingness to innovate.

I would like to thank the Board of Trustees, the Director of Education and our school and system leaders for their unrelenting commitment to our collective work.

Dr. Denese Belchetz, Former Associate Director of Education
York Region District School Board

November 2014**[Intermediate Math through an Online Learning Environment](#)**

Authors: David Hung Cheong Lan and Jean Claude Ah-Teck

Technology is omnipresent in today's society. With the advent

of communications technology and the proliferation of Web 2.0 tools, online learning is becoming more and more popular. It enables people from remote areas to have access to education, which was almost impossible some years ago. Online learning is gaining ground in Ontario schools and is rapidly expanding throughout Canada and the world. It allows the breaking of barriers of distance and all that is needed is an internet-accessible device connected to the Internet. This paper gives an overview of the important factors that have to be considered when designing an online learning environment, with a focus on the teaching of Mathematics to students in the intermediate grades.

Keywords: communications technology, social media, online learning, 21st century, web 2.0, mathematics**[Demonizing management and canonizing leadership: The rise and currency of the ethical dimension of leadership for sustainable quality school improvement](#)**

Authors: Jean Claude Ah-Teck and David Hung Cheong Lan

This conceptual article focuses on the most important and overarching 'quality' principle of leadership and discusses it from an evolutionary perspective in an educational context. It depicts the shift in emphasis over time from managing to leading a school organization. Importantly, it highlights the under-researched ethical dimension of leadership in implementing quality in a school context in deep, sustainable ways. In particular, Starratt's (2004) creative leadership framework provides a brilliant fusion of the philosophical and the practical for the practice of moral leadership. It challenges all school leaders and educators to view the learning process as an overwhelmingly moral activity that engages the full humanity of the school community and to move beyond mere technical efficiency in the delivery and performance of learning.

Keywords: educational leadership, ethical leadership,

sustainable leadership, school improvement, quality education**[Creating Innovative Spaces, a Universally Accessible Schoolyard at James Robinson Public School in the York Region District School Board](#)**

Author: Dr. Lara Chebaro, Principal and Mrs. Jeanette Mclellan, Teacher

James Robinson Public School at the York Region District School Board has a small student population comprised of students with multiple exceptionalities, students with autism, students with learning needs and so forth. Due to the nature of needs in our school and the variety of classrooms that we have, it is imperative that teacher instruction aligns with student need and interest. Our innovative summer pilot program allowed teachers to use environmental awareness within a universally accessible curriculum to meet these diverse learning needs and interests. The results of this program, gathered by staff members through observations, conversations and products clearly show a significant increase in student empathy, inclusiveness and achievement levels in the areas of literacy and math as per EQAO and Report Card Data.

Keywords: innovative program, inclusive learning, universally accessible curriculum, universally accessible school yard, environmental stewardship, disabilities, reverse integration**[Student Work Study: Learning Through the Work in Mathematics](#)**

Authors: Joan Bullivant, Nancy Golding, Teri Turner, YRDSB SWS Teacher Researchers

The Student Work Study (SWS) Initiative is a provincial study established and funded by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS). The SWS Initiative enables provincial school districts and LNS to work in partnership to improve student learning and achievement in both literacy and numeracy for students from K – 6. The SWS Initiative engages teachers

as co-learners in a collaborative teacher inquiry. This monograph highlights the recent Student Work Study work done in mathematics at YRDSB.

Keywords: mathematics, collaboration, inquiry, student work study**A Framework for Inclusive Leadership through the lens of Critical Theory**

Author: Clelia Della Rovere

The purpose of this paper is to outline a framework for inclusive leadership that is informed by the principles of critical theory, since critical theory is a key component of inclusive leadership. The first section of this paper explores different tenets of critical theory that are foundational in supporting an educator's ability to unpack and critically analyze some of the structures that marginalize certain populations. The second section explores inclusive leadership as a vehicle to support the authentic inclusion of all populations within schools. For this paper, I borrow from Ryan's (2013) concept of inclusive leadership to explore the strategies socially just minded principals use in creating inclusive school environments such as communication practices, critical learning strategies, fostering school community relationships, and exercising strategic advocacy.

Keywords: inclusion, inclusive leadership, inclusive leadership strategies, inclusive schools, social justice leadership, equity, critical theory, discourse, hegemony, hidden curriculum, social justice, marginalization**Education and Communication in the 21st Century**

Author: Daniella C. Di Lucia

With the introduction of new technologies in the 21st century, the ways in which communication occurs have changed drastically. These changes have percolated into the classroom, modifying the way both students and teachers communicate by promoting critical thinking skills and bilateral discourse.

Research has posited that, through appropriate modelling, teachers can effectively demonstrate the appropriate use of various technological tools while communicating and enhancing curricular knowledge.

[Using Strong and Positive Leadership to Increase the credibility and motivation to learn French in the core French Program](#)

Author: Angelica Farr

At the high school level there are three streams in which students are able to learn French — French immersion, core French or intensive French. Depending on the stream that is chosen content, skills as well as teachers vary, however the need to increase and maintain motivation to learn a second language is imperative. Through the use of effective leadership strategies, such as subject expertise and the power of our person, French teachers are not only able to motivate and inspire students to find their own want and drive to learn a second language but improve the credibility and public views of learning French as a second language in their communities.

[A Learning Framework: Securing consistently high-quality learning for every student in every school](#)

Author: Tony Glover

A commitment to professional capital has the express aim of ensuring that every student has the best possible learning experience in every lesson. Case study research in England suggests that the potential for exceptional learning exists in all schools, including those targeted for transformation. The standard of learning, however, is, in many schools, variable and in some schools innovations in approaches to learning

rarely become fully internalised within the institution.

␣The application of a simple Learning Framework has enabled a cultural shift to take place in schools and systems so that a dynamic approach to improving learning becomes embedded and sustainable. The Learning Framework contains five integral elements which will promote a holistic approach to the leadership of learning across the school and across the system and which will secure continuous improvement in the learning experiences of every individual student.

Teacher Professionalism Constructed in Policy

Author: Lynne Hollingshead

The definition of the social construct of teacher professionalism is ever changing, influenced by the discourse generated by teachers themselves, policy and public perception. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, this study explores how teacher professionalism has come to be articulated in an Ontario Ministry of Education Policy, and shines a light on how the context of such a policy can foster dissonance in the social construction of professionalism through the enactment of the policy. The results suggest that all actors involved in policy development and enactment need to be aware that articulating professionalism in policy may actually negatively contribute to the ongoing discourse.

The Transformative Effect of Experiential Education: Creating "Trudeau Terrace"

Authors: Susan Johnston and Kristy Webster

Teachers at two high schools work collaboratively to provide experiential learning experiences to increase student engagement, well-being and achievement in the Teacher Learning

and Leadership Program (TLLP). The vehicle for this project is the creation of an outdoor gathering place designed and built by students and staff. Journal reflections by staff describe how as the landscape is transformed, human relationships develop and blossom.

[Report of the Jurisdictional Learning Visit Tower Hamlets and Hackney, London, UK](#)

Authors: Dr. Denese Belchetz and Dr. Kathy Witherow

The York Region District School Board values professional learning opportunities beyond Ontario for the purpose of benchmarking the work of the Board against other high-performing educational jurisdictions. This past July, 2014, a team of teachers, school administrators, and superintendents, from the Board visited Tower Hamlets and Hackney in London, UK to observe high-leverage strategies in school districts that are in challenging circumstances. The learning from this experience and previous visits is highlighted in the 2014 London Jurisdictional Learning Report, and has been impactful on the strategic thinking and collective practice in our district over the years.

[Is There an App For That? Using Mobile Technology to teach health Education in Grades 4 and 5](#)

Author: Wahid Kahn

The question underpinning this study was 'How do students respond to specific mobile technology applications as tools in teaching health education (HE)?' in order to understand the educational potential for these devices. The goal of this

study was twofold: first, it examines the impact of mobile technology in the classroom by observing the use of mobile apps among grade 4/5 students during their lunch period. Secondly, it uses a traditional in-class teaching approach to understand how mobile applications may be used to teach HE during instruction time. This paper will report on the first phase examining four different types of health-related mobile apps and their effectiveness in the classroom.

Keywords: technology, mobile apps, devices, apps, health education, health curriculum**The Native Speaker as an Othering Construct: Negotiating a Hybrid Third Space Identity Within a Binary Framework**

Author: Maria Merecoulias

Negotiations of 12 international people were examined. The purpose was to view the processes that influence participants' perceptions and the positive attributes they associate with being in a third space. The understandings were organized under the categories: language, culture and identity. The most salient theory utilized is from Homi Bhabha's The Location of Culture. Central texts include Canagarajah, Myhill, Bourdieu and Schecter among others. Analyses revealed that respondents' ability to flexibly compartmentalize elements of diversity in language and culture allowed them to maintain a strong core identity. Findings elucidate the importance of choice in participants' navigation of their third space identity, by using characteristics of hybridity to their advantage. By analyzing successful third space engagements, it may be possible to transfer elements of individuals' traverse to immigrant and refugee high school students struggling with acculturation.

Keywords: identity, language, culture, hybridity, ESL**Leadership Resiliency — A Personal Attribute and an Organizational Necessity**

Author: Beate Planche

Leadership resiliency is increasingly a needed personal attribute as well as an organizational necessity. This article suggests several strategies that may assist leaders as they seek to stay resilient while supporting others. Resiliency is related to a growth mindset and certainly an optimistic habit of mind. Emotionally intelligent leaders model a frame of mind which values the development of resiliency in others as well as maintaining a strong sense of self-efficacy. Leaders influence a working culture in tangible ways including how they deal with adversity and constant change.