

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

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Administrator Involvement in Local

In its report to Provincial Executive Council (PEC), the Blue Ribbon Panel on the School Administrator was particularly concerned about widespread reports that involvement in the affairs of the Association was viewed negatively by some in the recruitment, hiring and promotion of school administrators. The panel noted that, "It is important to the overall governance of the teaching profession that school administrators assume positions of leadership within the profession." It further noted that "the teaching profession functions better with the active involvement of all its members." PEC assigned the responsibility to investigate and make recommendations on this issue to the School Administrators Issues and Concerns Committee (SAICC).

SAICC gathered information during the fall of 2005, which was reviewed at its January 17, 2006, meeting. Preliminary information indicated that the involvement of those holding administrative designations in the leadership of the local varied widely across the province. To ascertain why these discrepancies exist, SAICC has created a survey that will be sent to both administrators and the president of each local.

Please watch for this survey and take the time to complete it—your participation is vital if the Association is to take steps to ensure that there are no barriers to administrator involvement in their local. For further information, please contact Susan Fraser, Secretary to SAICC.

Attention CSA Members

There are two positions open for election on the executive of the Council on School Administration: **secretary** and **communications officer**. You will be receiving nomination forms by mail for these positions. An explanation of the duties of the positions will be included. If you require any further information, please contact Johanna Juergensen, President of CSA, at (403) 223-2292.

Upcoming Events

Council on School Administration, Greater Edmonton Regional Annual Awards Banquet

2006 05 11

Royal Glenora Club

More information can be obtained by calling James Fraser at (780) 962-8788

Annual Representative Assembly of the Alberta Teachers' Association

2006 05 20–22

Calgary, AB

Resolutions to be debated were enclosed in the 2006 03 14 issue of the *ATA News*



The Teacher's Voice

Teaching is a complicated profession wrought with challenges, triumphs and constant change. Few other professions are as visible and open to scrutiny as teaching. Although people sit one-on-one with their doctors when they are in need of medical care, witnessing the probing and prodding, and hearing the diagnoses and suggested treatments, they are hesitant to offer their own opinions because they view themselves as unlearned in the ways of Hippocrates and his protégés. Yet it is not uncommon for teachers to be treated to a myriad of external inputs, whether in the forms of advice, policy, regulations, legislation or research.

Teachers possess a wide repertoire of specialized skills and strategies specific to the profession. What enables teachers to call themselves professionals and what separates them from the regular Jane or Joe on the street who often believes that they can walk into the classroom and do the same job as a skilled teacher? It is their ability to turn their teacher training into practical classroom application. It is their ability to simultaneously juggle 20 or more individual cases, some more severe than others, and to do their own diagnoses and treatments as the need arises. This can involve looking a child in the eye and knowing how their first hour of the day went before they walked through the school door that morning. It can

involve motivational techniques to keep mass interest and involvement with little disruption to the learning of the whole. It can involve specific pedagogical interventions that are almost instantaneously rewarded with obvious student learning. It can involve structures that are put into place throughout the school year, knowing that they will pay off many years down the road. Intertwined with all of this is a professional judgment that allows them to assess their students' growth, with or without the aid of external instruments.

It is precisely because of this specialized body of knowledge and skills that they have mastered and continue to master that classroom teachers must ensure they remain at the forefront of discussions related to their students and their learning. Too often, classroom teachers are too busy or feel too marginalized to contribute to crucial decisions that affect their practice. Whether in their classroom, their school, their school district or the province, teachers need to rise to the occasion and be heard.

The accountability pillar is a recent example of teachers needing to be involved. Although well-intentioned, and presented in the guise of informing stakeholders as to the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system, the proposed revisions sorely lack the rigour of sound pedagogy that many

teachers know. In the absence of teacher input and expertise (practising classroom teachers, that is), emphasis moves away from the principles of educationally sound practice toward what is convenient and meaningful to those who are removed from student learning, often resulting in complex learning outcomes being reduced to statistics and standardization.

Although they lack the perceived sterility of a blind study, sound instructional and assessment strategies are as transparent and informative as any externally imposed accountability measure. Parents still want to know how their own children grew during the year and what evidence there is to show for it, no matter how many numbers the instruments provide them with. The leadership that teachers can provide in their learning communities, whether at the school level or beyond, is rich and necessary. The knowledge gained from their participation in action research, student assessment and school leadership is important in making sure that schools are working well and that teachers are working as professionals. It behooves school-based administrators, district office staff and policymakers to facilitate authentic teacher participation in determining what is measured and how it is measured. Classroom teachers have much to offer.

For further information, visit www.teachers.ab.ca or contact Member Services at the Alberta Teachers' Association, 447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta).