



CASSA-ACGCS
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

Greetings from the President

Inside this Issue

Greetings from the President,
Page 1

Greetings from the Executive
Director, **Page 2**

Back to School: A Look at our
Youngest Learners, **Page 3-7**

New Advertising Opportunities,
Page 8

Call for Abstracts, **Page 9**

**All websites and email addresses are active.
Click them to connect immediately with various
resources.*

“When one of us had a great moment (an excellent shot), the other three celebrated and were able to take their next shots using their teammate’s success. It was the ultimate in a great collaborative team venture.”



Reg Klassen
CASSA/ACGCS President

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents Summer Institute occurs every August. Like past years, the event began with a dinner, which was followed by the first of many presentations. Prior to dinner, attendees were able to participate in a golf tournament. We played a best ball golf game, where each of the four players takes a golf shot then we all play from where the best shot landed. I enjoyed this afternoon immensely because I love golf, but more important was the opportunity to spend time with three people who I got to know much better as provincial colleagues because of our afternoon together.

In her book *Dare to Lead*, Brené Brown states, “Vulnerability is not winning or losing. It’s having the courage to show up when you can’t control the outcome.” Our golf foursome did not win, but we did not see ourselves as losers. None of us make a living playing golf, so our very worst golf was in plain view for our teammates to see at numerous points during our 18 holes together. This reality required from each of us a level of courage to leave ourselves vulnerable with our less-than-perfect golf skill set. Our best was also demonstrated but not as often, given our ability. And finally, we did not control the outcome, suffice it to say that we simply trusted that the process would bring us to a better score than each of us playing our own game – which it did! If we could score that well when we played our own game, then each of us could make a living playing golf.

During that afternoon, none of us had power over the others, no one had a title, and there were no golf experts in the group. When one of us had a great moment (an excellent shot), the other three celebrated and were able to take their next shots using their teammate’s success. It was the ultimate in a great collaborative team venture. For me, this is the goal all our working teams should strive to achieve in our respective divisions or districts.

There is so much to learn from the pursuit of golf!

Greetings from the Executive Director



Ken Bain
CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

Welcome back to what I hope was an enjoyable change of pace for all of you, enjoying some down time with family and friends. Whether you travelled or stayed close to home, or even stayed at home, a summer break is always welcomed!

CASSA enjoyed another successful annual conference this July in British Columbia—almost 200 school system leaders and educators gathered to further their understanding of promising practices that support active healthy living for our students.

The conference opened with the presentation of the EXL Award for excellence in school system leadership. Thanks to XEROX Canada for its ongoing sponsorship of the award. The 2019 national recipient is Shannon Barnett-Aikman from the Northwest Territories.

We were led off by Dr. Doug Gleddie, from the University of Alberta, who brought us some of the statistics and context for the importance of a strong physical

education program in our districts and divisions.

His keynote was followed the next day by Ted Temerzoglou, VP and Student Success from Thompson Educational Publishing, who provided even more of the research and context for healthy active living and its importance and relevance to student wellness.

The next day and a half included 40 workshops that covered such themes as outdoor play, including risky play, physical active wellness, and student mental health and well-being.

Thursday afternoon was spent engaging in our own wellness activities in and around Stanley Park, as many went for a 45-minute historical walking tour, while others went on a bike ride. The afternoon ended with a wonderful networking reception overlooking the Vancouver waterfront.

My thanks to David Mann from EF Educational Tours for his support to make the Thursday events happen; EF organized our Stanley Park activities and co-sponsored the reception along with CASSA.

Thanks to all our sponsors who generously provide support to the conference. Please check the complete list of exhibitors on our conference webpage (http://conference.cassa-acgcs.ca/CASSA_sponsors.html).

Thanks as well to the delegates who took time to be with us in British Columbia. We know that PD money can be tight, and we appreciate your commitment to CASSA this year.

Lastly, a huge thanks to the members of the CASSA Board of Directors who came to British Columbia. Without their ongoing support, the organization would not be able to be so successful.

CASSA Board of Directors

President
Reg Klassen

Past President
Anne O'Brien

President Elect
Curtis Brown

CASS (Alberta)
Barry Litun and Karen Shipka

LEADS (Saskatchewan)
Ben Grebinski, Gwen Keith,
Lynn Little

MASS (Manitoba)
Barb Isaak and Donna Davidson

OPSOA (Ontario)
Joy Badder and Colleen Kappel

OCSOA (Ontario)
John Kostoff and Theresa Kennedy

NWTSA (Northwest Territories)
Metro Huculak and Curtis Brown

ADGESBQ (Quebec)
Michael Chechile

AAESQ (Quebec)
Christopher Fuzessy and Jan Langelier

RNDGÉ
Valérie Morand and Anne Bernard-Bourgeois

NBSSA (New Brunswick)
Zoë Watson

BCSSA
Claire Guy and Kevin Kaardal

NLASSA (Newfoundland and Labrador)
Gerald Buffett and Bronson Collins

AASA Eastern Rep
Cindy Finn

AASA Western Rep
Mike Borgford

Directors At Large
Penny Prysnyk (Yukon) and Bill Cooper (Nunavut)

Executive Director
Ken Bain

BACK TO SCHOOL

A Look at our Youngest Learners

Yellow school buses and new backpacks—these are the unmistakable signs that another school year has started. For the youngest students in school systems across Canada, these days also mark the start of their academic journeys. Kindergarten students (or grade primary students in Nova Scotia) are embarking on some big learning adventures.

In this “Back to School” *Leaders & Learners* series, we’ll take a look at some of the innovative kindergarten programming options offered in three different school systems:

1. Southwest Horizon School Division’s new full-time play-based kindergarten program;
2. Parkland School Division’s nature kindergarten program; and
3. Calgary Board of Education’s Indigenous kindergarten programs.

What does kindergarten programming look like in your school division? How has it evolved since it was first offered? Does your division’s kindergarten programming include any unique focuses, settings or perspectives?

Full-time Play-based Kindergarten

Play is a fundamental part of how young children explore their world. Not only does play offer a way for them to develop relationships with their peers and caregivers, but it is also strongly connected to how children learn. Early childhood play experiences can be linked to problem solving, language acquisition, literacy and math. It also has a role in developing social, emotional and physical skills. The new Southwest Horizon School Division’s full-time kindergarten early learning program offers a number of ways for children to learn through exploratory play.

About five years ago, several schools in the Manitoba-based division took part in a kindergarten pilot project. The focus of the pilot project was to offer more



Findings based on data gathered from Southwest Horizon students, staff and parents showed that full days of play-based learning kindergarten programming offered every weekday provided the children with more opportunities to develop pre-math, pre-reading, problem solving and social skills.

time for kindergarten students to be in a play-based, literacy- and numeracy-rich environment to enhance the development of key skill sets.

Findings based on data gathered from Southwest Horizon students, staff and parents showed that full days of play-based learning kindergarten programming offered every weekday provided the children with more opportunities to develop pre-math, pre-reading, problem solving and social skills. The pilot project's findings also showed that full-day kindergarten gave the children more opportunities to practise everyday conversations and allowed their teachers to model speech and vocabulary for them.

After the pilot project ran for several years, and after examining research from Canadian and international sources and reviewing positive feedback from the community, parents and school staff, Southwest Horizon School Division decided to provide budgetary support for full-time kindergarten in each of its community schools. This support began in the second term of the 2018-19 school year.

What does this new model of full-day play-based learning look like at Southwest Horizon schools? There are now more opportunities to try different forms of play for extended periods of time each school day. Students can learn in a

number of ways through exploratory play, including at Play and Learning Centres, Block Centres, Dramatic Play Centres and Sensory Centres. Each of these centres gives young learners the chance to choose from a variety of open-ended learning experiences, to initiate play and to follow their natural curiosity.

Play and Learning Centres

These centres let kindergarten students explore new ideas and concepts as teachers provide strategic instruction and time to practise and consolidate new learning. As they play, students develop their own questions and methods of investigation while developing their independence in making choices, problem solving, time management and personal responsibility. They are supported throughout by the guidance of their teachers.

Block Centres

Kindergarten students can use blocks as open-ended learning materials. They can determine how simple or complex the play can be with blocks, as they don't have to fit together in any particular way compared to other building toys such as Lego or Tinkertoys. The long uninterrupted periods of play available through full-day kindergarten programs means children have more time to plan and

create with blocks, either on their own or collaborating with peers.

Dramatic Play Centres

Dramatic Play Centres let children act out real-life experiences, whether it's playing house, hospital, store, construction site, vet clinic, restaurant or other settings in their community. These centres can be designed and adapted throughout the year to relate to children's interests, to let them try out a variety of challenging activities and gain new competencies. As well, dramatic play offers opportunities for children to enhance their literacy and numeracy skills.

Sensory Centres

When children engage in sensory exploration, they begin to develop an understanding of their natural and physical world. Sensory centres give them chances to understand different senses and the types of information they collect through these experiences.

Kindergarten students at Southwest Horizon schools have daily experiences with sand, water, light tables, play-dough and other media, all essential materials for purposeful play. Sensory play centres often include materials and equipment such as loose parts, sifters, measuring spoons and cups, funnels, rolling pins, scoops, pails, toy animals and cars, and sponge letters and numbers. These sensory activities give children opportunities to learn about math and science. For many children, the activities at a sensory centre can be therapeutic and calming. ○

About Southwest Horizon School Division

Southwest Horizon School Division was established in 2002 through amalgamation. It has its division offices in two locations: Melita and Souris. It is a rural school division, serving an area of approximately 6,500 square kilometres, with 13 schools. Six of these schools are located in Hutterite colonies. The economic base in this part of Manitoba is agriculture, although recently there has been increasing development in the energy sector.

Carolyn Cory is the Superintendent for Southwest Horizon School Division.

To learn more about this and other programming in the division, visit www.sbmb.ca. Southwest Horizon School Division can also be followed on Twitter @SWHorizonSD.

Nature-based Kindergarten



Being outdoors is another way that young children learn about their world. It is also an important factor in their overall health. In 2015, the Council of Chief Medical

Officers of Health released a position statement on active outdoor play:

“Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.”

Other Canadian organizations have also expressed strong support for children having regular access to outdoor play opportunities:

- “When children are exposed to nature and the outdoors, they are happier, have more energy and are less anxious.” (ParticipACTION)
- “We know that time spent in nature and being active outdoors is beneficial to children’s health and overall well-being, and helps improve their resiliency, academic performance and social skills. When children spend time outside in

“Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development.”

nature, they find opportunities to learn, explore, discover and understand the natural environment.” (Nature Canada)

Parkland School Division, located west of Edmonton, Alberta, has developed a kindergarten option designed to get young students active and experiencing nature firsthand. At the same time, the program gives families the opportunity to extend their young child’s learning day from half-time to full-time. Nature Kindergarten,

developed in partnership with Muir Lake School and the Scouts Canada Camp at Chickakoo Lake Recreation Area, lets children spend most of their designated “nature” day outside engaged in meaningful ways with their body, mind and spirit while in a natural setting.

The program is a response to identified early childhood indicators that showed there was a need for additional social and physical development programming within the division. Nature Kindergarten also seeks to explore the impact on early learning using the natural environment as a place where curiosity, play, problem-solving and calculated risk-taking can happen in a safe way.

The nature-based program is taught in two areas. The location depends on the season, with most of the classes run offsite at the Chickakoo Lake Recreation Area Scouts Canada Camp. The rest of the classes are held at Muir Lake School. If a child attends regular kindergarten on Monday and Wednesday, they attend Nature Kindergarten on Tuesday and Thursday, and vice versa. When they attend regular kindergarten, they follow the division’s current kindergarten programming at their usual community school classroom.

The Chickakoo Lake Recreation Area is a scenic mix of woods, wetlands and lakes. It is home to an abundance of birds and wildlife, such as moose, deer and beavers. There are opportunities for hiking, exploring waterfront, wetland and forest areas and more. The area also includes indoor shelters, washrooms and learning labs, all of which offer additional spaces for outdoor education opportunities.

Working as a group of explorers, Nature Kindergarten students take part in self-directed play and inquiry. As they encounter and engage with multiple natural learning environments, they begin to develop confidence in their own abilities to investigate and collaborate outdoors.

Students are physically active during their nature-based school days, and they also have the chance to develop movement skills related to their balance, stamina and strength.

Trained and certified staff support students as they refer to an emergent curriculum in addition to a risk management plan to include activities and learning experiences that take place outside. The classroom teacher and several educational assistants also support the students in their outdoor learning environment. ○

About Parkland School Division

Parkland School Division operates 23 schools and several alternate sites in an area

of nearly 4,000 square kilometres. Its schools are in or near the city of Spruce Grove, the town of Stony Plain and several other small communities west of Edmonton, Alberta. It has approximately 580 teaching staff and 379 support staff.

Parkland School Division's executive leadership team is made up of Superintendent of Schools Shauna Boyce; Deputy Superintendent Mark Francis; and three Associate Superintendents: Scott Johnston, Dianne McConnell and Scott McFadyen.

To learn more about nature-based kindergarten and other programming in the division, visit www.psd70.ab.ca. Parkland School Division can also be followed on Twitter @psd_70.

Indigenous Kindergarten Programs



In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its 94 calls to action as part of its summary report. Several of these calls to action address changes needed in public education across Canada. These include:

- Making age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties and Indigenous peoples' historical and

contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for all students from kindergarten to grade 12; and

- Developing and implementing K-12 curriculum and learning resources on Indigenous peoples in Canadian history and the history and legacy of residential schools.

The Calgary Board of Education has declared its commitment to support and

enhance the achievement and success of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in alignment with its Three-Year Education Plan and Alberta Education's Collaborative Framework. It has also stated its belief in creating inclusive learning environments where all students feel included, safe, valued and supported in their learning. According to a 2015 *Calgary Herald* article, there are about 4,000 students in the Calgary Board

of Education who self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.

The board currently offers several early years programming options that reflect Indigenous cultures. The kindergarten programs at the Niitsitapi Learning Centre, the Medicine Wheel Learning Centre and the Piitoayis Family School each offer full-day learning environments with an Indigenous focus and foundation.

Niitsitapi Learning Centre Kindergarten

The Niitsitapi Learning Centre's goal is to improve Indigenous students' long-term success in school and prepare them to live in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. It does this by giving its students a positive foundation at the beginning of their school years and by supporting school-to-school transitions in later grades. This strong foundation is developed in a learning environment that reflects and nurtures their Indigenous identity.

The centre, located in the city's south-east quadrant, opened for preschool, kindergarten and Grade 1 students in September 2016. The program added Grade 2 in 2017-18 and Grade 3 in 2018-19.

Full-day kindergarten programming at the Niitsitapi Learning Centre is based on nurturing the mind, heart, spirit and body of each student while honouring the diversity of Indigenous cultures, languages and ways of knowing and learning:

- We know and understand through traditional knowledge, western knowledge, early learning and personalized learning.
- We belong through relating to self, family, school and community.
- We are connected through cultural ceremonies and teachings, history, human relations and healing.
- We know through experiential learning, play-based learning, land-based learning and well-being.

Medicine Wheel Learning Centre Kindergarten

The Medicine Wheel Learning Centre's kindergarten program is part of an initiative created by the Métis Calgary Family Services Society, a non-profit, charitable organization, in cooperation

“The Calgary Board of Education has declared its commitment to support and enhance the achievement and success of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in alignment with its Three-Year Education Plan and Alberta Education’s Collaborative Framework.”

with the Calgary Board of Education. The program is based at Valley View School, a kindergarten to Grade 5 school also in the city's southeast.

The Medicine Wheel kindergarten program seeks to support and encourage child and family development in a balanced way, based on the Medicine Wheel. Its curriculum covers the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of life and development. It is First Nations and Métis focused, and builds on language, academics, social development and school preparation with a strong music and cultural theme. Programming includes Michif and Cree language; Métis heritage, cultural jigging and fiddle music; Indigenous storytelling; traditional drumming and the ongoing involvement of parents and Elders.

Piitoayis Family School Kindergarten

Piitoayis Family School was established in 2002 and serves not only kindergarten students but also those from Grades 1 to 6. It offers a diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives and experiences to all learners in those grades who want to learn through Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

The name “Piitoayis” means “eagle lodge.” “Eagle” reflects the significance of the eagle to Indigenous people, and “lodge” refers to the school as a gathering place. It is pronounced “Be-doi-yis.”

Kindergarten students are exposed to traditional teachings and oral practices

of the Blackfoot Nations and all other Indigenous peoples who make their home in southern Alberta. Core Blackfoot values and belief systems are integrated into teachings, including spirituality (ceremony), kindness to others, an awareness of environment, being observant and the ability to take on tasks independently. The diverse Indigenous protocols, practices and processes of all Indigenous peoples represented by school staff and students are honoured in learning, including daily smudge and talking circles, yearlong involvement of Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and opportunities to learn on the land.

The Calgary Board of Education receives funding for half-day kindergarten from the provincial education ministry, and has committed to supplementing that funding to provide full-day programming at certain schools, including Piitoayis. ○

About the Calgary Board of Education

The Calgary Board of Education has more than 14,000 employees serving over 121,000 students in more than 245 schools in Calgary, Alberta.

Christopher Usih is the Chief Superintendent of Schools for the Calgary Board of Education. (Christopher was featured in a recent “Faces in the Crowd” profile.)

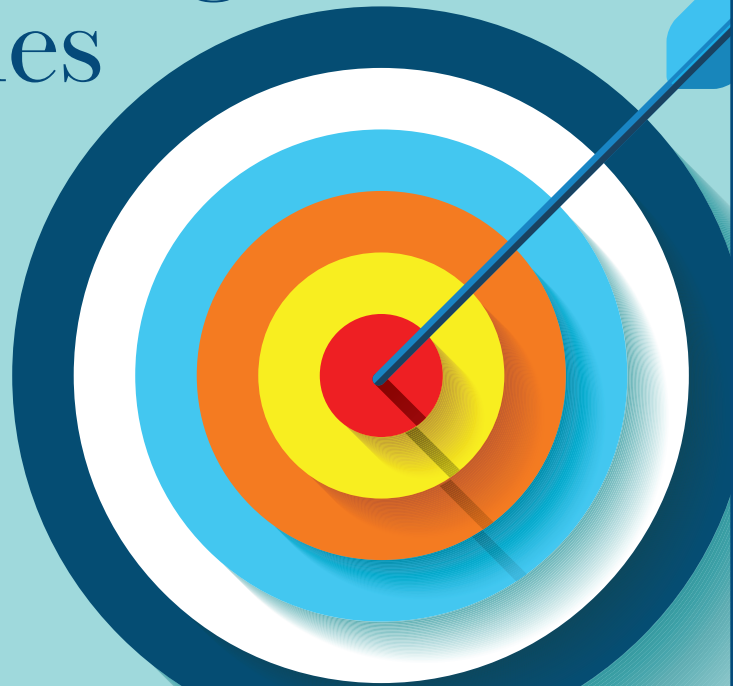
To learn more about these Indigenous-focused kindergarten options and other programming in the CBE, visit www.cbe.ab.ca. The Calgary Board of Education can also be followed on Twitter @yyCBEd.

New Advertising Opportunities

Target your products, services and expertise to Canada's educational leaders.

Now available! A new bundle allows you to advertise in this Newsletter, the *Leaders & Learners* magazine and CASSA's website at a great rate!

Get in touch for details:
sales@matrixgroupinc.net
866-999-1299



Read past issues of this Newsletter and the *Leaders & Learners* magazine at <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca>.

Please support this Newsletter's sponsor!



Solution Tree
Education Canada



CASSA-ACGCS
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

Published for the Canadian Association of School System Administrators

1123 Glenashton Drive
Oakville, ON L6H 5M1
Tel: 905-845-2345
ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca
www.cassa-acgcs.ca

Articles written by Tara Wittchen

Published by Matrix Group Publishing Inc.

309 Youville Street
Winnipeg, MB R2H 2S9
Tel: 866-999-1299
editor@matrixgroupinc.net
www.matrixgroupinc.net

Share Your Success Stories!

**EQUITY
AND
INCLUSION**
FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING
ST. ANDREW'S BY THE SEA, NB • JULY 2-4



Write for the
Winter 2019-2020
issue OR the
Summer 2020 issue of
Leaders & Learners!

We are looking for features and success stories from each region of Canada: Eastern Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Western Canada and Northern Canada.

THEME: EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOR STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

We are looking for articles about how schools, school districts and community partners are **supporting every student** through programs, community partnerships, professional development for principals/teachers, etc, that promote *Equity and Inclusion for Student Mental Health and Well-being*.

The Winter 2019-2020 will drop into the mail the first week of January 2020. The Summer 2020 edition will be mailed to readers in Spring 2020, and will be available to attendees at our Conference, which will be held July 2-4, 2020, at St. Andrews By-the-Sea, New Brunswick, and is focused on this same theme.

If you have an article idea that fits into this theme, please send a short abstract (50 to 100 words) to Shannon Savory, editor of the magazine, at ssavory@matrixgroupinc.net, and copy ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca.

Proposals are due: September 13, 2019
Final articles are due: November 1, 2019
Photos are welcome (must be high resolution)
You will be notified if your abstract is selected.



CASSA-ACGCS
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students