



Équité et excellence en éducation  
CASSA-ACGCS  
Equity and Excellence in Education

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

# Greetings from the President

**I**t is bringing me more pleasure than usual to ring in the new school year. As we all know, 2020/2021 brought unprecedented challenges. We wouldn't have made it successfully through last year if not for our ability to lean into one another.

As many of you know, the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) collaborated with the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) and co-hosted a successful three-day virtual conference this past July that covered three extremely important topics of equity and inclusion for student well-being: *Racism in School Systems*, *School Mental Health*, and *Indigenous Education & the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action*.

These topics and the conference directly aligned with and contributed to CASSA's **vision** for equity and excellence in education for each learner, and CASSA's **purpose** to strengthen the capacity of senior school system leaders through national dialogue and professional learning.

We had over 500 participants registered, and more than 200 participants logged in on each of the three days of the event. For those who were able to join us, I hope that you found the keynote addresses and sessions you attended informative and thought provoking as you headed into the summer and then returned reinvigorated with new ideas for a productive 2021/2022 school year.



**Curtis Brown**  
CASSA/ACGCS President

We're seeing the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, and we need to remember to be the light and inspire the light in others as we continue to address our ongoing equity and inclusion challenges. A wise person recently told me (I would tell you who if I remembered), that in 2021/2022 we should "re-open the schools of the future and not the schools of the past."

Through the new and existing challenges, please continue to be kind to yourselves and others, and stay in community and collaboration. Learning happens best in community. Together we are stronger.

Don't forget, the next CASSA Conference will be 'in-person' if all goes as expected with the pandemic in beautiful St. Andrews By-The-Sea, New Brunswick. So please mark July 6-8, 2022, in your calendars now!

Don't forget, the next CASSA Conference will be 'in-person' if all goes as expected with the pandemic in beautiful St. Andrews By-The-Sea, New Brunswick. So please mark July 6-8, 2022, in your calendars now!

# Greetings from the Executive Director



**Ken Bain**

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

**W**elcome back to what everyone hopes is a more “normal” school year!

## Identity, purpose, and vision

The Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) Board of Directors recently approved a newly designed logo that now includes our key message: “Equity and Excellence in Education/Équité et excellence en éducation.” The board also clarified CASSA’s identity as the national network of senior school system leaders whose vision is “equity and excellence in education for each student.”

CASSA’s purpose is to strengthen the capacity of senior school system leaders through national dialogue and professional learning.

## EXL Awards for 2020 and 2021

At the 2021 Annual General Meeting, CASSA awarded its prestigious XEROX

EXL Award for outstanding school system leadership. There were co-recipients in 2020: Dr. Renee Closs, Superintendent of Schools from Sahtu Divisional Education Council in Norman Wells, Northwest Territories; and Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools from Edmonton Public Schools, in Edmonton, Alberta. Denise André, recently retired Director of Education from Ottawa Catholic School Board, in Ottawa, Ontario, received the award for 2021. Congratulations to all the nominees! CASSA looks forward to honouring the XEROX EXL Award recipients for 2020, 2021, and 2022 at CASSA 2022.

## CASSA/CSBA 2021 virtual conference

This year, our CASSA and the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) 2021 virtual conference was a success! It attracted hundreds of trustees, commissioners, and senior school system leaders from across Canada. The theme, Equity and Inclusion for Student Well-Being, was extremely timely. Day one focussed on Racism, day two on

Student Mental Health, and day three on Indigenous Education and Reconciliation. There was fantastic engagement from all participants. My thanks to Nelson Canada for its support in providing the platform for the conference. Thanks as well to all our sponsors: Baragar Systems, ThoughtExchange, Greenfield Learning, and Zorbit’s.

## CASSA 2022

CASSA is excited to return to an in person annual conference in July 2022 at beautiful St. Andrew’s By-The-Sea, New Brunswick. The theme will be “Reimagining Education.” More details to follow, but make sure to save the dates for July 6-8, 2022!

**Ken Bain**

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

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# The French Language Teacher Shortage Data Infrastructure Project



By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

Canada has been experiencing a French language teacher shortage for some time now. There have been ongoing challenges related to recruitment, mobility, and retention of French Minority Language (FML) teachers—also known as francophone teachers in minority language settings—and French Second Language (FSL) teachers.

Although various provincial and territorial governments, school systems, and other professional associations have individually studied and reported on these challenges, there has been no collaborative pan-Canadian effort to collect data that could support strategies to address the shortage and related issues. That is about to change with the development of a Canadian Data

Infrastructure that will collect, house, and share data about the shortage.

Funded by the federal Department of Canadian Heritage, key partners include the Canadian School Board Association (CSBA) and la Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) in collaboration with le Regroupement national des directions générales de l'éducation (RNDGÉ) and CASSA. Other key partners in this initiative include school boards, universities and other post-secondary institutions, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, various levels of and departments within government, families of affected students, and other advocates for French language education in Canada.

According to Statistics Canada, the number of students enrolled in immersion programs increased 47.8 per cent from the 2006/2007 to the 2016/2017 school year. The number of students enrolled in francophone minority schools increased 14.3 per cent; however, there has not been a matching

increase of teaching professionals qualified to teach in French.

In May 2021, a virtual roundtable was held to discuss some of the innovative ways in which school systems are already working to counter the effects of the shortage of French teachers in minority language settings and in French Second Language programs, and how a Canada-wide database would best serve them.

“We had everyone at the table, not just school systems but all the key players—whoever has either an impact on what's happening or would be impacted by this shortage,” says Mary-Ann Zauhar-Hiscock, an educational consultant and the project manager for the database initiative. “It was the first time that system administrators were brought to the table to be part of the discussion.”

From her conversations with school boards, she has noticed that they have each developed their own strategies to cope with the shortage.

“The solutions are very localized, as they should be, because the situations are different in each school jurisdiction.”

While there have already been other local quantitative studies and lots of local anecdotal research, this data infrastructure project is a completely new initiative created to characterize what is happening across the provinces and territories and to determine ways to work together on data gathering and sharing. The

mandate of this data infrastructure initiative will go beyond calculating the shortage numbers across the country and incorporate data analysis so that stakeholders can get an accurate picture of the situation. For example, the project will look at the issue of teachers on leave or who has retired.

“How many teachers are we losing in the first five years of their career? That’s a very crucial time for teachers. How many feel that

they’re adequately prepared? Then there’s the whole issue of proficiency. What factors determine language proficiency? How do we standardize these? How many agencies are involved in certifying teachers? And how are we dealing with those needs? What percentage of our workforce has immigrated to Canada? How do we make better use of these opportunities?”

This approach will allow school systems to identify the gaps to generate solutions, and then have access to federal funding to move forward.

“In the end, we hope that school systems will have more direct access to government funding to help them generate solutions to what they’re experiencing,” Mary-Ann says. “Our mandate is clear. We don’t have an agenda other than to gather this data, present a clear picture and make sure that our instrument is scalable, and that it might evolve to better reflect what’s happening with the francophone and French language teacher shortage across the country. In the end, it’s all about enhancing student learning.”

One of the benefits of collaborating with organizations like FNCFS and CSBA, she notes, is that the project is better able to represent what the actual shortage looks like and perhaps facilitate conversations to be able to share resources more equitably.

“It’s an opportunity for us to know what the complete picture looks like. We’re aware that through this shortage, we share resources,” she says.

The effects of this shortage and the related challenges with recruitment, mobility, and retention are felt everywhere. Large urban boards are experiencing greater needs in terms of number of staff, and they have constant mobility challenges related to parental leave and retirements. Smaller or remote boards have challenges in terms of accessing a pool of available teachers. It’s also a multi-layer issue—there isn’t just one cause.

“We know that we need to attract young people to the profession,” Mary-Ann says. “We are aware of this due to the research that has already been done. Universities are also aware of the issue that we are all facing.”

Although education is a provincial and territorial responsibility, this project takes a pan-Canadian approach and involves some leadership at the federal level. That national lens makes sense, as funding is available through Canadian Heritage and the Official Languages Commission for improving bilingual services and for providing access to

**A Call to Action!**

**Canada's French Teacher Data Project**

Support learning by developing a sustainable and accessible pan-Canadian data infrastructure to collect, store and share accurate data that can be used to address the teacher shortage in French Minority Language settings and in French Second Language programs across Canada #PuttingDataToWork

[HTTPS://WWW.CDNSBA.ORG/FRENCH-LANGUAGE-TEACHERS](https://www.cdnsba.org/french-language-teachers)

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**A call to action:**  
**French Teacher Shortage in Canada**

We're putting data to work to fulfill FSL/FML teaching requirements across Canada.

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The Calls to Action are designed to address teacher shortages in French minority language settings.

bilingual education or francophone education for all Canadians.

“School systems depend on some of that money to boost their programming,” says Mary-Ann. “That money comes federally, through grants that are available to various associations and through Canadian Heritage for projects such as this one. The funds are in support of projects targeting the recruitment and retention of francophone and French language teachers.”

The data on the French language teacher shortage has an impact beyond local and provincial jurisdictions. It also affects how the federal government decides the best way to spend or source that money. More funding may be available, too, if school boards are able to show proof of their needs and the gaps that exist with actual quantitative data.

The data gathered for this project can also help facilitate conversations between groups that have had nothing much to do with each other prior to this, Mary-Ann says.

“We’re having conversations with all of the key players in this. All those school jurisdictions that are feeling the shortage on the ground, they are not alone. We’re all in it together. There’s a big section of people who are neither directly impacted by nor do they directly impact our project. But they’re key resources for many people and having them be part of the conversation and informed about what’s happening is really beneficial because they have their own impacts on their own groups.”

Mary-Ann notes she’s pleased by CASSA’s participation to date.

“CASSA has been wonderful in terms of buy-in. This issue has been at their table for a long time, and they have been so helpful in getting their school board’s HR departments involved and identifying key people who might be good resources for us.”

Her small data and research team is already holding interviews with various volunteers from some of those HR departments to help determine the design of the database.

“We want to be able to not only collect data that seems important to us but data that will serve school boards. We need to know what type of data management systems they’re using and what type of data they’re collecting, so the HR departments are helping us with that through interviews that we lead, and that all comes through CASSA.”

The ways that data is currently collected by various school boards is truly a spectrum. Some smaller boards are literally just picking

“In the end, we hope that school systems will have more direct access to government funding to help them generate solutions to what they’re experiencing.”

**Appel à l'action!**

Faisons parler les données pour répondre aux besoins des systèmes scolaires au Canada.

### Projet pancanadien de collecte de données Pénurie d'enseignants francophones

Appui de l'apprentissage par l'élaboration d'une infrastructure pancanadienne de données évolutives et durables pour améliorer le recrutement et le maintien en poste d'enseignants et d'enseignantes dans les écoles de langue française en situation minoritaire ainsi qu'en programmes de français langue seconde #FaisonsParlerLesDonnées

[HTTPS://FNCSF.CA/NOTRE-RESEAU/PENURIE-DENSEIGNANTS/](https://fnscf.ca/notre-reseau/penurie-denseignants/)

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## Un appel à l'action : Pénurie d'enseignants francophones au Canada

Faisons parler les données pour répondre aux besoins des systèmes scolaires au Canada.

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*The Calls to Action are designed to address teacher shortages in French minority language settings.*

up the phone to gather data, some larger boards have their own data management systems, and other boards have something in between the two.

“No one is collecting in the same way and different data management systems are used so we need to make our process user friendly. We need to make it so that it may become a useful tool for those who haven’t yet begun to collect any data regarding their teacher shortage, recruitment, mobility, or retention issues. We’ve been told by some boards already ‘Make this so it will help me in my data collection.’”

For some, she says, this data infrastructure might be an easy way to tie into what they’re already doing so that various data banks can “talk” to each other, and boards can easily transfer what they have into this nationwide data system.

“The support that we get from CASSA and school jurisdictions is so crucial to our being able to successfully build something that will do the job that it’s meant to do and support school jurisdictions at the same time. That’s why identifying key people in those jurisdictions is so important to us.”

For school systems, the benefits of developing this sustainable and accessible data infrastructure include:

- improved tracking of teacher recruitment, immigration, certification, and mobility
- more accurate forecasting and comparative analysis
- an expandable database
- increased access to federal funding
- support in developing a pool of qualified French teachers who understand second language acquisition and pedagogy

While Mary-Ann’s team has initially focused on building relationships with various

partners, stakeholders, and other participants and making sure they all understand what the project is about and what benefits it offers, there is still a whole technical aspect of the data infrastructure to develop. Its actual design has yet to be determined but the project committee will soon meet with the design team.

“Behind the scenes, we’ve been having conversations about how we are going to design this. Who can we partner with? What variables are we going to use? What variables will best serve school systems on the ground for their planning, assessment or in establishing trends? What’s it going to look like? Where will our database be housed? How will we design secure but easy access for people? There’s the whole security and privacy issue that we’re very aware of.”

Users can expect a secure, members-only portal. They will also have access to support, including how-to webinars, and the data infrastructure will be simple to use as they input data through a series of questions and choices of variables.

“The questions need to be clear and concise so that there’s no second guessing—we want accurate data. It will be scalable and able to be easily updated so that we can continue to clearly represent what is happening in terms of recruitment, retention, francophone, and French language teacher shortage across Canada. We may be asking for data in areas that people haven’t begun to track and so this might be their opportunity to begin.”

Her team has produced an infographic designed to appeal to system leaders, available at the CSBA website (cdnsba.org) and FNCSF website (fnscf.ca). It is also available on their Facebook pages. This document includes a section called “How can you help?” containing tips for superintendents,

directors of education, and other senior administrators to get involved. Suggestions include the following:

- Bring the data infrastructure initiative to their provincial and local tables.
- Identify and encourage key people in their HR departments to meet with the project team.
- Be a strong voice for qualified French language teachers in their school system.
- Tell the project team what data would help them in their workforce planning.

If you are an interested system administrator not yet involved with the project, you can get in touch with Mary-Ann directly at mazauhar@gmail.com. Her data and research team will respond with specific ways that they can help. The team is especially interested in hearing from leaders who want to have their board be part of the project’s test and control group. ○

## Phases

*The Canadian Data Infrastructure on French language teacher shortages initiative has three phases. The project’s timeline will see Phase 3 complete by spring 2022.*

### Phase 1

- Build relationships and grow the partnership
- Raise awareness
- Complete an environmental scan
- Obtain stakeholder buy-in
- Design the database

### Phase 2

- Pilot the database strategy
- School systems share their data
- Analyze respondents’ data
- Continue to communicate with stakeholders

### Phase 3

- Collate and analyze data
- Publish results
- Write report and recommendations for Canadian Heritage
- Share findings with stakeholders



Watch future issues of *Leaders & Learners* for updates on how some school boards are dealing with the French language teacher shortage and why they’ve decided to get involved with the data infrastructure initiative.

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Partners of Canada’s French Teacher Data Project.

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# 2020-2021 EXL news

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**DARREL ROBERTSON,**  
**2020 AWARD RECIPIENT**  
Edmonton Public Schools



**DR. RENEE CLOSS,**  
**2020 AWARD RECIPIENT**  
Sahtu Divisional Educational Council



**DENISE ANDRE,**  
**2021 AWARD RECIPIENT**  
Ottawa Catholic School Board

**I**t is with great pleasure that *Leaders & Learners* announces the 2020 and 2021 Canadian Superintendents of the Year!

The 2020 co-recipients of this year's Xerox Excellence in Educational Leadership Award, also known as the EXL Award, are Darrel Robertson and Dr. Renee Closs.

The 2021 recipient of this year's EXL Award is Denise Andre.

Congratulations to each of the five system leaders who were nominated for the 2020 and 2021 awards:

- Denise Andre, former Director of Education and Secretary Treasurer for



**KURT SACHER,**  
**2021 NOMINEE**  
Chinook's Edge School Division



**SIMONE GESSLER,**  
**2021 NOMINEE**  
Yellowknife Catholic Schools

the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSSA)

- Darrel Robertson, Superintendent for Edmonton Public Schools (CASS)
- Dr. Renee Closs, Superintendent for the Sahtú Divisional Education Council (NWTSA)
- Kurt Sacher, Superintendent of Schools for Chinook's Edge School Division (CASS)
- Simone Gessler, Superintendent for Yellowknife Catholic Schools (NWTSA)

All five EXL nominees were profiled in *Leaders & Learners* 2021, Issue 3, available at <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/site/Default.aspx?PageID=67>.

The 2020 awards were postponed until this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, which resulted in the cancellation of the 2020 CASSA conference. Awards for both 2020 and 2021 were presented during CASSA's 2021 virtual conference on July 7, 2021. CASSA remains grateful to Xerox Canada for its ongoing support of this prestigious national award.

The EXL Award is presented at each national conference (barring extraordinary circumstances) to the CASSA member who has exhibited exemplary leadership ability and who has enhanced

the profession of school administration throughout their career.

The Canadian Superintendent of the Year is also recognized at the annual American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conference, where the American Superintendent of the Year is selected. The 2022 AASA conference is scheduled to take place from February 17 to 19, 2022, in Nashville, Tennessee. Each EXL national recipient is invited to attend this important leadership gathering.

The EXL award has been presented since 2002. Recipients also receive honorary life memberships to CASSA. Previous EXL Award recipients include Shannon Barnett-Aikman, David Keohane, Dr. John Malloy, Joan Carr, John Crocco, Brent Kaulback, Kim Jenkins, Robert Mills, Linda Fabi, Curtis Brown, John Mackle, Johanne Messner, Geoff Williams, Carol Gray, Ron Canuel, Edie Wilde, Ed Wittchen, Roy Seidler, and John Darroch.

Also announced during the 2021 virtual conference were two Honourary Life Memberships. This distinction is presented to recognize excellence in education at the national level and is intended to honour individuals who have contributed

significantly to CASSA. This year's recipients are Barry Litun and Michael Chechile.

Barry is the Executive Director of the College of Alberta School Superintendents. He has also served as Superintendent of Lethbridge School Division and Deputy Superintendent of Red Deer Public. He has been a member of CASSA for 14 years.

Michael is the former Director General of the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB); he retired in the fall of 2019. Prior to that, he served as the Senior Director of Educational Services and Technology for LBPSB and was the principal of three elementary schools within the board. He has been a member of CASSA for 9 years.

CASSA is grateful for the exceptional service and contributions of both Barry and Michael over the years. Congratulations to them on receiving this honour. CASSA also extends its congratulations to all EXL Award nominees and recipients from the past two years.

If you know of an outstanding school system administrator who is deserving of one of CASSA's awards, consider putting forth a nomination package. Watch for details on the CASSA website and in early 2022 issues of *Leaders & Learners*. ○

### 2022 EXL Award Nominations

Do you know someone who exhibits exemplary leadership ability, is an incredible role model, and who has enhanced school administration? Nominate them for the 2022 XEROX EXL Award!

Applications will be accepted between October 1, 2021, and May 16, 2022. Awards will be presented at the Annual Conference July 6-8, 2022.

For more information, visit <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/Page/37>.





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

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## Mark Your Calendars for CASSA's Annual Conference in 2022!

**July 6-8, 2022**

**St. Andrew's By-The-Sea, New Brunswick**

The CASSA Annual Conference is hoping to meet in-person in beautiful St. Andrews By-The-Sea in 2022. It is going to be an amazing way to re-connect school system leaders from across Canada to learn and share information on current topics in education. We hope you'll join us!

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*The theme for 2022 is  
reimagining education.*

*Make sure to save the date!*

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Photo by  
George Girnas  
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