

## Greetings from the President



### Artificial Intelligence in Education



Michael Helm  
CASSA/ACGCS President



### Inside this Issue

Greetings from the President,  
Page 1

Greetings from the Executive  
Director,  
Page 2

Looking Back and Looking Ahead  
with Ken Bain,  
Page 3

Announcing CASSA's New  
Executive Director,  
Page 6

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

I hope the start up in your schools and centres has gone well. In last month's issue of *Leaders & Learners*, I mentioned that I would share some thoughts about artificial intelligence (AI) and the possible impacts it may have for us, as system leaders. AI is increasingly transforming education in Canada, offering new opportunities for both effectiveness and efficiency in the classroom. From personalized learning experiences to streamlined administrative tasks, AI is reshaping the educational landscape.

One significant advantage is its ability to provide personalized learning experiences. AI-driven platforms can analyze students' learning patterns and adapt content to their individual needs. AI also enhances efficiency for the educators in the classroom. This allows educators to focus more on instruction and student interaction.

The integration of AI in education does raise some concerns. One issue is data privacy. As AI systems collect and analyze student data, there is a risk of sensitive information being misused or inadequately protected. I feel that it is in this area that I must spend time and resources to have proper processes, procedures, and guidelines in place for everyone's protection. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada has highlighted the need for robust data protection measures to ensure students' privacy is maintained (*Principles for responsible, trustworthy and privacy-protective generative AI technologies*, Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2023).

Another concern is the potential for widening educational inequities. AI tools require access to technology, which may not be equally available to all students. The Anglophone school boards in Quebec cover vast territories with many remote, rural areas. This makes it difficult for many of our students to have equal opportunities.

Ultimately, education will always be based on relationships. While these impressive tools have been developed and will continue to evolve, the need for teaching and learning to be relationship-based will always be an imperative foundational component of student success. While educators may fear the use of AI to "cheat," we need to focus on these tools as a means to improve teaching and learning. Trust between student and teacher allows for transparent and meaningful opportunities for both parties to explore the 'why' behind using these tools.

AI will also allow for more reflective practice and potentially a more meta-cognitive space – getting teachers and students to think more about their thinking. How will teaching practices adapt for further use of these tools, in assessing if a student has truly learned something? Could conversation and dialogue take a larger role than the traditional written assignments?

"Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is most important." – Bill Gates.

"Our intelligence is what makes us human, and AI is an extension of that quality." – Yann LeCun.

I am leaving you with more questions than answers... Let us continue to keep learning and growing together.

Take care.

# Greetings from the Executive Director



**Ken Bain**

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

## CASSA Expands its Reach

I have just returned from Europe at which time I represented the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) on an international “stage” at the inaugural meeting of the Global Network of Deans of Education. Deans from throughout the world were invited to attend, including three Canadian universities. The following were represented: United States, South Africa, Jamaica, England, Scotland, Germany, Austria, Hong Kong, Botswana, and Singapore. Also in attendance was a member of the UNESCO Global Report on Teachers, who was from Paris. I was honoured to have been asked to represent CASSA as attendance at this symposium was on an invitation-only basis.

The focus of the symposium was a review of how deans of education and partner educational leadership associations are contributing to the achievement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). SDG4 is about quality education and is among the 17 sustainable development goals established by the United Nations in 2015. The full title of SDG4 is “Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning for All.”

Joining CASSA were other partner associations: The School Superintendents’ Association (AASA), and the International Confederation of Principals.

The symposium began with a keynote address from Davide Ruscelli, Senior Project Officer (Coordinator) for the International Taskforce on Teacher Education 2030, Paris France. Davide presented highlights from the

Global Report on Teachers, the aim of which is to address teacher shortages and transforming the profession. He highlighted nine “levers to reverse teacher shortages:” improving salaries and retirement schemes; technology integration, training, mentoring and psychological support programs; school, parents, and communities forming committees; pedagogic school leadership and practices that foster collaboration among teachers; induction programs for both novice teachers and principals; teacher autonomy; incentives; and ensuring the rights and protection of teacher migration and the needs of their countries of origin. Of note is that this was a world-wide study and not all the levers can be easily translated into a Canadian context.

I shall provide more insights and learning in subsequent newsletters. I wish you all a great October.

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# Looking Back and Looking Ahead with Ken Bain

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

*A note from Tara: It has been my pleasure to have had the opportunity to work with and get to know Ken Bain during his years as the executive director for the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA).*

*When Ken first took on the role in 2012, the organization was known as the Canadian Association of School Administrators (CASA) and was still working toward becoming a truly national voice. In 2013, it launched a new name, with deliberate emphasis on the phrase “school system administrators.” That same year, CASSA also launched a new website.*

*Under Ken’s leadership, CASSA has continued to evolve and expand its influence. Now in 2024, its membership includes representation from Quebec, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Its network has also expanded to include several education partners, and ties remain strong with its American counterpart, the School Superintendents’ Association (AASA).*

*Through this evolution and growth, Ken has remained a steady, attentive and positive influence. The tributes submitted by his peers that appeared in last month’s issue of Leaders & Learners attest to his professional and personal legacy.*

*All the best to you and Eileen, Ken, as you embark on your next adventures together.*

*What follows is an interview between Leaders & Learners and Ken Bain.*



Ken celebrating his beloved Tiger-Cats. Photos courtesy of Ken Bain.

## Do you recall your first introduction to CASSA (or CASA as it was then known)?

I was elected as the CASSA representative in my capacity as a board member from the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers’ Association. This involvement began in around 2008.

## What were your initial impressions of the organization? What do you recall about its strengths as a national organization at that time, and of challenges it was facing?

My initial impression was overwhelmingly positive. There was an energy among the CASSA board members as we shared an understanding of the importance of a national network of school system leaders. Our common focus on creating a national organization is one strong recollection. The main challenge CASSA was facing was that not every province or territory was at the table. In fact, when I joined the CASSA board, only

the Northwest Territories, Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta were members.

## When did the idea of serving as CASSA’s executive director first present itself to you? What did you feel you could offer CASSA at the executive level and by working closely with the board?

Frank Kelly, the incumbent executive director, was retiring. I was approached and asked to put my name forward to the board for consideration as his replacement. I hoped that my passion and commitment to the national organization might be helpful in growing our membership.

## What are some of the bigger challenges in leading a national organization like CASSA, especially when public education is a provincial responsibility and there are regional differences?

Actually, understanding and appreciating those regional differences are among the



*Ken with Daniel Domenech, AASA Executive Director (retired), and Bob Mills, CASSA Lifetime Member.*



*Ken and his wife Eileen with Cindy Finn, Director General, Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal.*

positives of CASSA membership. Another learning has been that regardless of location, the leadership issues remain very similar.

**What have been some of the unique challenges you faced in your time as executive director?**

The main obstacle initially was trying to re-engage provinces and territories that had been members and had left the organization.

**What advice can you share from your experiences in terms of working through those challenges?**

My advice is to listen, pay attention, and act on the concerns so that credibility and trust can be established.

**What policies or models does CASSA now have in place to sustain it?**

Our current strategic plan with a focus on Professional Learning, Governance and Operations, and Communication and Engagement should provide a strong foundation to continue the work.

**What sustained you over the 12 years you served as CASSA's executive director? What kept you wanting to continue in this role – what keeps it interesting and rewarding?**

Seeing the membership grow to include school system leaders from all 10 provinces along with Northwest Territories has been very gratifying. Our monthly Cross-Country Check-in, at which time board members from each province and territory provide an update on the state of education, is a board meeting highlight. We recently expanded the length of our meetings from 60 to 90 minutes to give everyone a voice at the table.

**What have been the greatest rewards in this role and in your time with CASSA in general?**

I have had the good fortune to work with dozens of leaders throughout the country, all sharing a commitment to the national voice. I have developed many professional relationships along the way.

**What are the biggest differences and similarities you have observed in public education from your early years as a classroom educator and school administrator through system administration to now?**

From my early years until now, the biggest change has been the politicization of education. It may have always been a factor but as a Grade 5 teacher starting out, it wasn't on my radar. Another major change has been the increased involvement of parents and caregivers in school life, which I saw evolve as a positive as a school principal. This has, for the most part, been a positive although recently some parental "involvement" has not been so positive and has become a significant challenge. The politicization of education is what has impacted the recent tone of certain parent groups.

**What are some changes in public education in Canada you can see coming in the near future that leaders, including CASSA's leadership, must be mindful of and prepared for?**

The main current and future issue is the impact of artificial intelligence on teaching

and learning. In addition, the evolution and sophistication of technology will continue to impact teaching and learning.

**CASSA has developed strong partnerships and networks over the years, and it has launched or supported a number of important initiatives. Which of these are you especially pleased to have seen developed? What stands out about them?**

The most significant network of which I am most proud is the Canadian School Mental Health Leadership Network. The network includes leaders from the Canadian School Boards' Association (CSBA) and CASSA. I sit on the Steering Committee with Dr. Cindy Finn from Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal, CSBA Executive Director Nancy Pynch-Worthylake, and Dr. Kathy Short from School Mental Health Ontario. We are joined by thought leaders and researchers from throughout Canada who share their knowledge and experiences with network members from CASSA and CSBA.

**What are you most looking forward to in terms of seeing Reg Klassen come into the role as executive director? Do you have any advice you'd want to share with him and future executive directors, presidents, and board members, especially thinking back to any insights former executive director Frank Kelly may have shared with you 12 years ago?**

Frank Kelly was an exemplary leader who worked tirelessly to keep the organization moving forward. In many ways, he was a mentor of mine. Among his strengths was his ability to create and sustain professional relationships. I would like to think that my success in building relationships with leaders from the non-member provinces led to their eventual return to the organization. Reg Klassen has served as a Manitoba rep on the board and went through the chairs from president-elect to president to past president as a member of the CASSA executive. I have no doubt that he will continue to grow the engagement of CASSA members as a result of his strong interpersonal skills.

**You and your wife Eileen have had some wonderful adventures over the years. What's next for you two?**

We have had many memorable adventures that my being the CASSA executive director has afforded. We have enjoyed many travels throughout Canada and into the United States at AASA conferences. Eileen and I are looking forward to being able to travel without looking at the calendar of my CASSA obligations.

**What's next for you, personally?**

Other than travel – and not being glued to emails and calendars – that's about it.

**Are there any individuals, teams, or organizations you'd like to acknowledge in terms of support for your work as CASSA's executive director, or in your previous roles as a school systems administrator, principal, and teacher?**

I need to pay tribute generally to the dozens of leaders with whom I have had the pleasure of working at the board table. I want to acknowledge the wonderful support that I have had from CASSA presidents over the years: Roger Nippard, Cindy Finn, Anne O'Brien, Reg Klassen, Curtis Brown, and Kevin Kaardal. They shared a vision for CASSA's potential and led CASSA "off the side of their desks" as leaders in busy and complex local jurisdictions. I have already mentioned Frank Kelly, who was influential in my leadership journey as a principal and ultimately at the CASSA board table.

**Your personal and professional highlights of the various CASSA conferences?**

I have enjoyed seeing our beautiful country from British Columbia to Yukon to Newfoundland and Labrador. Seeing my CASSA board friends and developing new friendships has been a highlight from year to year.

**Finally, the most important question of all: Your predictions for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats this season?**

As I write this, my beloved Cats are 2-8 so... I predict they will not be in the playoffs this year. That's okay, I guess. Let's let someone else have a turn. ○

# Announcing CASSA's New Executive Director



By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

**T**he Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) is pleased to announce Reg Klassen as the organization's new executive director. Reg takes on this role as Ken Bain retires after 12 years.

Reg is well known in both CASSA and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) circles. He served as CASSA's president from 2018 to 2020. Reg's first column in *Leaders & Learners* as president appeared in November 2018 (Volume 13, Issue 83), where he introduced readers to himself, his family, and his journey in education.

Watch for the return of his newsletter column, this time in the Message from the Executive Director space. Reg will also contribute his thoughts in the *Leaders & Learners* magazine's Message from the Executive Director, published twice a year. He has also served as vice president, president, and past president of MASS, helping



*Reg Klassen, Chief Superintendent, Frontier School Division.*

that regional organization join CASSA as a full member.

Reg's many leadership roles include serving as chair of the Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools and the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools Education Committee, and as a representative on the Manitoba Council for Leadership in Education. He also served on the Manitoba Poverty and Education Task Force and Attendance Task Force.

He is the chief superintendent for the Frontier School Division in Winnipeg. From 2008 to 2015, he served as superintendent for Rolling River School Division. From 2000 to 2001, he was superintendent for Garden Valley School Division.

As reported in the September 2024 issue of *Leaders & Learners*, Reg is also the inaugural recipient of the Nelson Excellence in Leadership Award. Formerly known as the EXL Award, this honour was presented to him in Montreal this July. In this capacity, he will be invited to attend the 2025 AASA (The School Superintendents Association) National Conference on Education in New Orleans, Louisiana, as Canadian Superintendent of the Year.

A full profile on Reg Klassen will appear in the November 2024 issues of *Leaders & Learners*. On behalf of *Leaders & Learners* readers and CASSA members, welcome and best of luck in your new role, Reg! ○

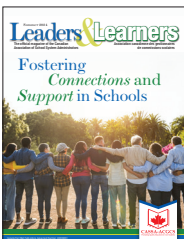
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