Leaders & Learners

THE VOICE OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ADMINISTRATEURS ET DES ADMINISTRATRICES SCOLAIRES

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October/November 2011

Volume 6, Issue 42

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Upcoming Events

- Attend the 2012 CASA conference in Whistler, BC, from July 5 to 8.

Message From The President: Supporting Initiatives And Innovations

We are continuing the conversation about leading into the future. Educational administrators from across Canada use and promote technology personally and professionally, to improve student achievement of all students from early learning programs to graduation. Many of us have been in education long enough to recognize that the technological changes that have occurred during the first 10 years of this century supersede the changes from the previous 25 years with the introduction of computers as a learning tool in schools. The concern and fears that technology would replace educators and that software could not possibly provide educational programs and services to meet the learning needs of all students have been replaced by a digitalized world. One cannot fathom a world in 2012 without technology, nor the ability to function, communicate or learn without the tools that we use daily to communicate with colleagues, staff, parents and students.

I begin my day by checking my BlackBerry for messages, emails, telephone calls and texts. I attempt to respond efficiently as I realize that the sender is waiting for a reply. I keep all of my appointments, meetings and commitments on my calendar and I check it

Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells
CASA president

regularly to keep up to the moment. All administrators in our school district have BlackBerrys for safety and security. There have been times when our district has experienced power outages and the school phones are not operational, so we communicate via BlackBerrys. School closures and emergencies are quickly transmitted with BlackBerrys. We are all connected and continue communication before, during and after instructional hours.

When I am in the office I spend part of my day at my computer terminal for a variety of administrative tasks. I am sure that this experience is familiar to all administrators. There is research to conduct, board reports to create and review, memorandums to develop and other projects related to the administration. All board documents have been scanned and are housed on a system called DocuShare, and all information about the board is electronic and can be found on the board's website. Thus time spent at my terminal is effective in order to administrate and communicate as an educational administrator.

Furthermore, as a superintendent of education responsible for a family of schools, I require information about each school that

Message From The Executive Director:
Leaders Of Change And Innovation In Canadian Schools

CASA members are leaders of change and innovation in schools across Canada. They have responsibility for keeping school systems current and at the leading edge of program delivery. It is a tough and demanding role. But it pays great dividends for the system and is rewarding for those who do it well.

The supervisory officer must assess what can be done to lead into the future for students, staff and parents. The following are some considerations in providing this leadership:

- Take the time to talk with students and understand their needs and priorities. Learn what technology they use regularly and how they use it. Remove barriers to effective technology use and different ways of accessing curriculum.

- Encourage staff to do this as well. Hold regular sessions for staff and provide training where possible. Collect best practices and share them through your system.

- Develop ways of communicating better with parents. Engage them in dialogue about learning and the use of new delivery techniques.

All senior administrators should be aware of blended learning models and practical application of progressive trends, and they should empower staff and students to move toward a better future of learning.

Frank Kelly
CASA executive director

Message From The President, continued

assists with supervision and school improvement planning. Recently our director of education John Crocco has introduced a new program for members of senior administrative staff whereby all school data, from demographics to student achievement data, will be housed on a platform and accessible via an electronic device. This recent technological development is creative, innovative and effective, as it will support us with working effectively with principals, vice-principals, and teaching and support staff to improve student achievement. Currently this data is available, but it is housed in a variety of different locations. This exciting future-looking technological advancement will support the leadership of senior administrative staff in schools when working on school improvement.

Recently at one of our meetings with principals, there was a presentation made by two teachers who are delivering a blended learning model of instruction to students. As the two teachers aptly described, blended learning is the combination of teaching and technology using a whiteboard, projector, internet resources from the Ontario Ministry of Education and their own instructional materials. This form of instructional strategy has been widely accepted by students and parents. Students are able to work at their own pace and parents are able to access the work completed by their children.

The teachers explained that it has been a learning process for them along with their students, and that taking one component at a time to introduce this form of learning has been successful and enjoyed by all involved in this innovative teaching and learning process. It is only a matter of time for blended learning to become an instructional strategy that will be experienced in all classrooms across Canada.

Therefore, as educational administrators leading into the future using and promoting technology in our school districts, we continue to gain more knowledge and practice personally and professionally to support staff, students and parents in today's classroom. Our support for new educational initiatives and innovations through technology encourages our staff and students to continue to explore new technologies, to seek out new innovative instructional strategies using technology and to go boldly where no educator has gone before to educate all of our students in this 21st century.

> We're still in the first minutes of the first day of the internet revolution.
> —Scott Cook

An In-Depth Feature With Ian Jukes:
Teaching, Technology And The Digital Generation

A highlight of the 2011 CASA conference in Niagara Falls was the presence of **Ian Jukes**. Ian presented two keynote addresses, Understanding the Digital Generation: Teaching and Learning in the New Digital Landscape and Literacy is Not an Option. Ian has been a teacher, administrator, writer, consultant, university instructor and keynote speaker. He is the co-director of the 21st Century Fluency Project, an international consulting group that provides leadership and program development in many areas. He has written 12 books, 9 educational series and more than 100 journal articles. Ian's most recent book is *Teaching the Digital Generation*, co-authored with **Ted McCain** and **Frank S. Kelly.** His Committed Sardine blog, an online electronic newsletter, is distributed to almost 90,000 people in over 60 countries.

Ian is an educator first and foremost. His focus has consistently been on the compelling need to restructure our educational institutions so that they become relevant to the current and future needs of children. His rambunctious, irreverent and highly charged presentations and articles emphasize many of the practical issues related to making sure that change is meaningful. His self-avowed mission in life is to make sure that children are properly prepared for the future rather than society's past. As a result, his material tends to focus on many of the pragmatic issues that provide the essential context for educational restructuring.

In this *Leaders & Learners* Q&A, Ian shares some of his ideas on children and neuroplasticity, technology and culture, and how educators can connect with today's digital generation.

To learn more about Ian's work and ideas, visit www.fluency21.com or follow him on Twitter (@ijukes).

What is the most profound effect that digital bombardment has on children? How is this changing the way educators need to teach in today's classrooms?
The central issue is that kids today look pretty much the same as we did growing up, which belies the fact that on the inside they are completely different. Because of digital bombardment—because of their pervasive exposure to digital technology, exposure that primarily happens outside of school hours—this digital bombardment is literally wiring and rewiring kids' brains on an ongoing basis. Their brains are constantly adapting to accommodate all the technology they spend so much time surrounded by.

They are what Canadian futurist **Don Tapscott** calls "screenagers"—the first generation that has grown up with a computer mouse and the assumption that images on a screen are to be interacted with. These technologies are their new learning tools and also are something to project their very identity on to—what writer **Marc Prensky** calls "digital natives."

They've developed a cultural brain profoundly affected by digital culture. Because of digital bombardment, the brains of today's children are changing physically and chemically. They are actually neurologically wired differently than we are.

The problem is that many teachers haven't had the same digital, online, high-speed experiences that their students have, so naturally many teachers only feel comfortable processing information at the conventional speeds they have experienced most of their lives. And, as a result, they don't understand or appreciate the digital generation's need for speed. So after digital learners have spent hundreds if not thousands of hours of their lives before and after school and on weekends and holidays playing video games, surfing the web, using cellphones and other digital devices wandering around in virtual environments, they come to school where many of them tell me they feel like they've literally run into a wall when they are confronted by the awesome technological power of an overhead projector or a dry erase whiteboard.

To really connect with the digital generation, educators need to start by acknowledging the absolute centrality of digital culture to their lives, and be willing, at least part of the time, to acknowledge, accept, to embrace and even show some respect for the digital world that is an everyday and internalized part of their students' lives.

What are the new thinking skills that today's workers need? How

> Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.
> —Steve Jobs

An In-Depth Feature With Ian Jukes:
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(Continued from page 3)

should educators change the way they teach to make sure they equip students with these skills?

Great question!!! Over the past two years, we have asked this question of more than 2,000 people from all walks of life—politicians, business folks, educators, parents. Inevitably it seems to come down to six major things.

First, students need the ability to solve complex problems in real-time.

Second, students need to be creative. They need to be able to think divergently and creatively in both digital and non-digital environments to create novel and useful solutions.

Third, they need the ability to think analytically. Comparing, contrasting, evaluating, synthesizing, and applying without instruction or supervision. Being able to use the higher end of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Fourth, they must be able to collaborate seamlessly in both physical and virtual spaces, with real and virtual partners in traditional and digital settings.

Fifth, they must be able to communicate effectively—not just using text or speech, but in multiple multimedia formats.

And finally, they must develop an appreciation of the social, the aesthetic, the esoteric, the philosophical, the moral and the ethical. We want to nurture students who are socially functional and prepared to operate in the new and changing world they're going to live in. We want to help them develop the skills that will make them a good person, a good citizen-parent, a community member and a positive contributor to our nation. We may quibble about the language a little, but every group of stakeholders we ask the question to, from parents up to national level officials, give us more or less the same answers.

We believe that traditional emphasis literacy is not enough. We believe that even if we were to educate our students to standards of the traditional literacies and the provincial/state curriculum, as we are doing in our schools, that our students would be literate by the standards of the 20th century, but they wouldn't be literate by the standards of the 21st century. If we're going to prepare our students for the world that awaits them once they leave school, we need to move our thinking, we need to move our training beyond our primary fixation on the traditional 20th-century literacies to a new and different set of 21st-century fluencies—the process skills

Ian Jukes leading a conference keynote address.
*Photos by Ed Wittchen*

that are absolutely essential for success in the new working and living culture of the 21st century.

How can educators keep up with the new media and technological developments that their students are accessing without becoming overwhelmed or neglecting other aspects of their work?

This is the wrong question. I could put a state-of-the-art piece of technology in the hands of every single student, every single teacher and every administrator, and if that's all I do, the only thing that's going to change is that the technology bill, not to mention the power bill, is going to be a hell of a lot bigger. Because the most powerful technology in the classroom was, is and will remain...a classroom teacher. But not just any classroom teacher—it has to be a classroom teacher with a love of learning, an appreciation of the aesthetic, the esoteric, the ethical and the moral. A teacher who understands Bloom and Gardner, who understands how different students learn at different stages of their lives.

The fundamental issue we are facing in the 21st-century classroom has very little to do with hardware and everything to do with HEAD-WARE—a focus on critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, information fluency, 21st-century collaboration and what it means to
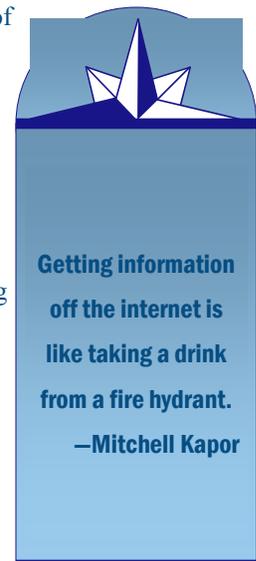
> Getting information off the internet is like taking a drink from a fire hydrant.
>
> —Mitchell Kapor

An In-Depth Feature With Ian Jukes:
Teaching, Technology And The Digital Generation, cont'd

be a global digital citizen in the new digital landscape. If teachers are willing to make a commitment to this, not only will test scores go up but students will leave our schools with the essential skills needed to survive in the culture of the 21st century.

Why do students today process information, interact and communicate in fundamentally different ways than any previous generation before them? Each generation of students is, of course, presented with new ideas and technologies—for example, the eras of the telephone, the television and the personal computer. What makes this particular generation unique?
Digital learners have had lifelong experience operating at twitch speed. For them, waiting for their computer to start up, waiting for files to download, waiting in a lineup to do something is a complete waste of time. This is primarily due to their constant lifelong exposure to video games, handheld devices, cell phones, hypertext and all of the other aspects of our increasingly digital, high-paced world. As a result of this chronic lifelong digital bombardment, digital kids have had far more experience at processing information at a far faster rate than we do. So naturally they're far better at dealing with high-speed information.

To coin a phrase from the movie *Top Gun*, the digital generation has an internalized "need for speed"—digital is their native language. It's the way they grew up.

Consequently, if we want to connect with the digital generation, we need to start by acknowledging the absolute centrality of digital culture to their lives and be willing, at least part of the time, to acknowledge, accept, to embrace and even show some respect for the digital world that is an everyday and internalized part of their students' lives.

In your presentation, you make reference to the concept of "neuroplasticity." What does it mean and why is it important for educators to understand it in terms of today's learners?
Neuroplasticity is the process of the ongoing reorganization and restructuring of the brain where the neurons are constantly rearranging themselves, making new connections and

pruning unnecessary ones—literally that the brain is plastic and malleable. So contrary to traditional assumptions about how the brain and mind function, we now understand that the brain is constantly creating new thinking patterns throughout our lives. It's important to understand that the brain is like a tree. Early on there's a flurry of growth as a tree grows extra branches, extra twigs and extra roots. Then, over time, the unused branches or pathways get pruned away or wither and die. It's this pruning that gives a tree its shape for the future.

The very same thing happens in the brain. There's a lot of truth to the old phrase "use it or lose it." The cells and connections that are redundant—the cells and connections that are seldom used—get neurally pruned away. Over time unused or underutilized neural pathways wither and die. Additionally, as new neural connections form during the early stages of life, the most heavily used pathways—the pathways that get sparked the most frequently—become coated or insulated with a substance called myelin, which is a fatty insulating sheath that speeds signal transmission in the brain.
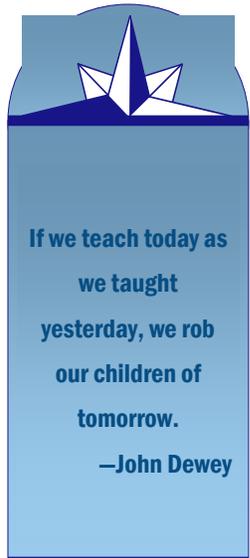
Being insulated in myelin will boost neural signal transmission speeds in the brain by more than 13 times. Which is a jump in speed equivalent to switching from dial-up to broadband. Myelinated circuits not only transmit 13 times as fast, they also transmit 30 times more information per second. So these myelinated neural circuits not only have greater speed but also greater bandwidth.

So you might ask what does this mean? It means that if you have a student who spends the majority of their time focusing on music or sports or academics, those are the cells and neural pathways that will become hardwired and insulated.

However, if you have students who spend the majority of their time lying on the couch playing video

> "The most powerful technology in the classroom was, is and will remain a classroom teacher."

> If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.
> —John Dewey

An In-Depth Feature With Ian Jukes:
Teaching, Technology And The Digital Generation, cont'd

games or watching TV, those are the cells and connections that are going to flourish.

In the end, the most used and useful connections develop into a complex high-speed neural network as a result of this regular exposure, and if the connections are not used or useful, they get pruned away. That's what neuroplasticity is and why it's important for teachers to understand it in terms of today's learners.

In your presentation, you've come up with eight key learning preferences of digital learners and compared them with "old-school" teaching styles. Why is it vital for today's educators to adapt their teaching strategies to their students' learning preferences rather than the other way around? Should we be at all concerned about this massive exposure to digital media?

Ian Jukes

Wow—a pretty big and complicated question to answer in 25 words or less but here goes. The digital generation is frequently criticized, derided, misunderstood, misrepresented and disrespected in the press. They're often accused of being intellectual slackers and antisocial beings who lack even basic social skills. However, the research says that on the contrary, for the vast majority, the digital world is far from an isolating experience—they're constantly in contact with one another. They're a highly social generation. Here's the difference: They're just not social the way that we're social.

They live at least part of the time in digital worlds they've created for themselves, they play *Warcraft*, they play *Mass Effect*, and hundreds of other MMORP games that are exciting and engaging. In these virtual environments, they create and control everything—they're users, they're active, there's excitement, novelty, risk, the company of peers. They observe, they inquire, they participate, discuss, argue, play, shop, critique and investigate.

As a result, they become easily frustrated because they expect, in fact they demand, to be able to be in control. The problem is that what they expect and experience in their world outside of school with their games and websites is completely at odds with what they experience in the classroom where everything is controlled by adults. They sit in classrooms where things are hierarchical, unidirectional, inflexible and centralized where the teacher stands at the front

of the room talking to them non-stop without even showing nice pictures.

It's boring. They control nothing. They have to sit there passively and listen. For them, school is all about being passive observers and learning endless deferred gratification, and I can absolutely guarantee you that it will not be possible much longer to engage young people in an educational system where the quality of experiences the school provides aren't as inviting and engaging as the quality of the experiences they can get outside the school. The digital generation will never accept the traditional stand-and-deliver educational model—they need to be in a situation where they're controlling things and that can never happen in the current school environment.

If you could share one key piece of advice for educators navigating this new digital frontier, what would it be?
Every generation since the time of Socrates and Plato, including our parents, has looked at the next generation—including us—and said "What's wrong with those kids?" There's nothing wrong with these kids. They're just different—neurologically different, that's why they see the world differently—they engage with the world differently.

There is a fundamental change going on in our culture and many adults refuse to recognize or accept this. We have every right to expect the digital generation to respect, understand and engage with our world and our values; that's how we transmit culture and democracy from one generation to the next. But in the same way that we have every right for them to respect our world, we absolutely also need to take the time to respect, understand and engage with their world and their values. Just because we were here first doesn't mean we can ignore their world. And we ignore their world at our peril.

Thank you, Ian.

> Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.
> —Arthur C. Clarke

Leading Education Into The Future: Educational Enthusiasm

By Bob Mills
director general
Lester B. Pearson School Board, Montreal, Quebec

As professional educators, we are most certainly well aware of the deep responsibility entrusted to us to provide relevant and meaningful education to the young people whom we serve. We recognize that we must provide opportunities for young people to learn with the new technologies now prevalent; we must learn and implement new engagement strategies; we must equip them to communicate both orally and in writing and, preferably, in multiple languages; numeracy requires constant attention. The demands upon the educational system are ever increasing and, without doubt, will not diminish as the years progress.

I do suggest, however, that in spite of these new requirements, a basic need supersedes all, and that is the requirement to develop in our students critical thinking skills and an emphasis on excellence. There is no doubt that these abilities, as well as the recognition that we face a competitive future, are essential to future success.

I do fear that as we focus on test results, on assessment techniques, on learning and teaching strategies involving the new technologies, we may forget an absolute essential, an ingredient that I refer to as *educational enthusiasm*. It may be defined as a daily celebration of learning and as a continual nurturing of the success of our students and their teachers, for such achievements take place daily in our classrooms and laboratories, from kindergarten through to graduate studies.

We have all experienced that infectious contagion of a baby's giggle and all have responded to the sound with at least a genuine smile of our own. In a similar fashion, I suggest that, for each of us involved in public education, a moment taken daily to enthusiastically mark the achievement of a student or a staff member will pay an enormous benefit that will resonate throughout our educational community. I suggest that such a tribute will invariably provide continued positive impetus to both staff member and learner.

Although the challenges we face daily can sometimes seem limitless, a passionate and sincere "Well done! Congratulations!" will invariably enhance and nurture the people and the learning environment of our organizations. That recognition, support and acknowledgement—the *educational enthusiasm* that we as leaders provide—will encourage and strongly enrich the efforts of our students and teachers and will create a most contagious burst of excellence.

It's so easy to do!

Leading Education Into The Future In Alberta: A Q&A With Barry Wowk

*How are you, as an educational administrator, using and promoting technology?*
Technology is playing a key role in assisting me address my daily tasks as a superintendent. Our district has come an exceedingly long way in the last few years in assisting our administrators become active leaders and participants in encouraging the use of technology in the classrooms. Alberta Education provided our district with a glorious learning opportunity when we were fortunate enough to receive a leadership grant that allowed us to truly form a professional learning community among administrators. In three short years we went from a feeling among school and district administrators that we weren't sure how we could keep up with the constant changes to one of confidence and assurance that if we keep working together we will be able to provide the support and leadership that is necessary.

The grant allowed us to hire an individual to give our administrative team the support we so badly required in the Educational Technology (ET) area. We also were able to contract the services of an outside consultant who provided our school-based administrators the chance to privately address specific questions or concerns they had about the acquisition and management of technology resources in their building.

Over the last few years we have held numerous meetings regarding the role of the school-based administrator in providing the necessary leadership in this area. We hosted a number of key presenters, including **Dr. Sherry Turkle** from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). We discussed the need to ensure that tech-
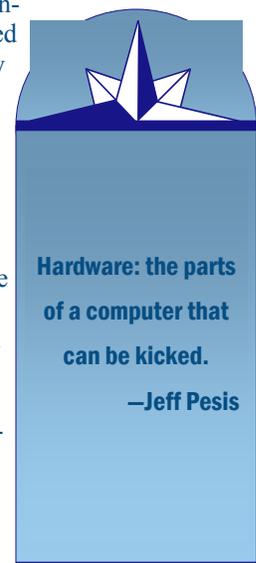
Hardware: the parts of a computer that can be kicked.

—Jeff Pesis

Leading Education Into The Future In Alberta:
A Q&A With Barry Wowk, continued

nology was indeed a tool in achieving the learner outcomes as opposed to being an outcome in and of itself.

Likely one of the most successful decisions I have made in the technology area was to form a leadership team of four to provide us with direction in the technology area. Our associate superintendent of planning and instruction, our coordinator of ET, our coordinator of information services and our associate superintendent of finance form the decision-making team. It has removed the tremendous pressure from one individual having to make the important final decisions. One such example was the decision for a small district like us (6,700 students) to move to Google apps for education as a communication and learning tool. It has turned out to be a great decision.

Barry Wowk on his iPad.
Photo by Ed Wittchen

What role does technology play in your administrative duties?
Technology has become a very key part of my everyday life. My BlackBerry and iPad rarely leave my side. Our Google calendars are now keys to my short- and long-term organization.

While I communicate continually through email, I must admit it has also become one of my biggest challenges or burdens. It has become exceedingly demanding of my time to try and keep up in a timely manner. I often think of Dr. Sherry Turkle's comments to our admin team where she indicated that if we don't learn to control our email issue it will begin to control us.

I do wish to stress, though, that I am not a believer in having a difficult or contentious discussion through email. I will always be a proponent of face-to-face or, at minimum, a telephone conversation to deal with a difficult topic.

What are your observations on the role technology plays in improving student achievement in your school district and in your province/region?
It is a wonderful tool that provides students with real-life and real-time feedback. I believe it greatly assists us in ad-

dressing our challenges of engaging students. However, it can also provide some challenges that we must learn to address in the act of teaching/learning. For example, I notice that more and more students and adults have less patience in thinking a problem through when they can simply "Google it" and get some possible alternatives. I must admit I can be guilty of that as well. As wonderful a tool as it is, it also brings new and different challenges for us to address. New challenges will require new strategies to resolve them. It will remain imperative that we continue to share with each other what is working well in addressing these new emerging challenges.

How do you and your colleagues promote the use of technology within your provincial affiliate and school district?
We utilize video conferencing and webinars a great deal. We also attempt to find ways to share what is working and what isn't working. Internally, we have utilized Google Sites to create an internal digital lesson repository. The "Curriculum Cloud," as we have called it, is a place where teachers can share lessons with other teachers teaching the same subjects.

How has technology affected the way you communicate with senior administrator colleagues, school staff and parents? Has it become easier? More challenging?
As mentioned, it has become increasingly challenging to keep up with email. However, there is no doubt in my mind that with the help of technology I am able to communicate with more stakeholders in a more timely manner.

While our district has utilized Facebook and Twitter, I, as superintendent, have been slow off the mark. I do have a Facebook presence but do rely more on face-to-face communications. Our staff newsletter (*News @ 6*) is now available electronically. Our schools and teachers utilize/create web pages that have helped to increase the variety in how we communicate. Some of our schools are utilizing Teacher-Logic and HomeLogic to improve communications with parents.

Barry Wowk is the superintendent of schools for the St. Albert Protestant Separate School District. He is also CASA's western regional director.

> Technology does not run an enterprise, relationships do.
> —Patricia Fripp

Leading Education Into The Future In Manitoba

By Paul Cuthbert
superintendent
Evergreen School Division, Gimli, Manitoba

New technologies have significantly affected every facet of modern society, including public education. The impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education is transforming administrative and pedagogical aspects in our schools. In the knowledge-based society of today, the sheer volume of accessible information is greater than ever before and is increasing exponentially.

An education system that prepares students to function in a knowledge-based society must first identify what a student must learn to function in such a society. Skills and attributes that were important in the past—literacy, numeracy and critical thinking—remain important today. The combination of technology and access to information means that these skills must be applied in different ways and supplemented with new skills for students to become full participants. The focus of these efforts needs to be on learning outcomes for our students, however, not on technology outcomes.

Today's vision of the K-12 education system is rooted in personalized learning. It focuses on providing all students with the skills they need to contribute to society while allowing them to explore an educational path best suited to their interests, capabilities and chosen future. Such a vision has been advocated before and steps have been taken toward it. However, the advancement of technology and the transition toward a knowledge-based society makes such a vision both more achievable and more important.

The infusion of ICT in schools can eventually transform pedagogy and the creation of knowledge. ICTs are contributing to building new relationships between schools and their communities, and to bridging the gap between formal, non-formal and informal education. These new opportunities are causing policymakers to rethink the skills and capacities that children need to become active citizens. The introduction of new technologies in schools, the integration of student-owned devices to facilitate learning, and the use of Web 2.0 applications and games has many school divisions reconsidering their ICT policies and instructional practices. There are also new challenges: cyber-bullying and blurred lines of communication for staff increasingly electronically connected with parents and students.

In Manitoba, our focus has been the development of Literacy with ICT. Literacy with ICT means choosing and using ICT, responsibly and ethically, to support critical and creative thinking about information and about communication as citizens of the global community. They develop this literacy through a process of inquiry across the curriculum as they plan and question, gather and make sense, produce to show understanding, communicate and reflect on their learning. This learning initiative was introduced at the K-8 level four years ago and is now extending in high schools.

Preparing teachers for the 21st century requires a close look at what it means to teach and learn in increasingly networked, technology-rich, digital classrooms. Schools and teachers need to thoughtfully and intentionally design learning environments and tasks in which teachers can explore issues that are relevant and develop pedagogies that are effective for a knowledge era. They need to develop new images and acquire new expertise to design and facilitate meaningful learning with technology. Given this world shift and new research from the learning sciences, one can see the complexity that teachers face in working with learners today. It also causes us as policymakers and decision makers to reconsider how we are allocating resources, transitioning to digital learning environments and planning for our professional learning models. Broadband connectivity is a major issue facing many of our schools that will require government initiative to see that this is an essential service.

The opportunities offered by the use of ICT in education are many. It has the potential to transform pedagogy and can lead to more engaging learning experiences and improved learning outcomes for our students. These effects are not limited to the classroom. For example, the transformation of distance education into e-learning and blended learning offers new options for delivery and new opportunities for in-service teacher training and support. The capacity of ICT to build borderless networks represents possibilities for innovative peer learning across communities and countries. In addition to redefining access to knowledge and instructional design, the infusion of ICT in all dimensions of economic, social and cultural activities has far-reaching implications in terms of the skills required to become an active member of society. The ability of students to effectively and responsibly use ICT has become a new requirement for effective education systems.

> One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things.
> —Henry Miller
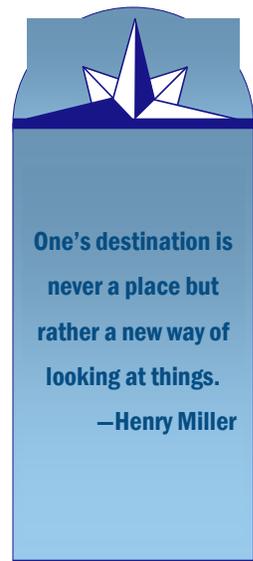
The 2011 CASA Strategic Planning Retreat

On September 15 and 16, 2011, CASA convened a national meeting of CASA affiliate representatives and provincial representatives to re-examine the position of CASA in Canadian education and setting future direction for the association. The meeting was held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Toronto.

Strengths

- CASA is the only organization with a national focus on senior educational leadership.
- It promotes the establishment of pan-Canadian networks focused on collegiality, making connections and building relationships.

From left, **Eldred Barnes** and **Ed Walsh** of NLADE, **Paul Cuthbert** of MASS and **Odette Bartnicki** of OPSOA.

Photos by Ed Wittchen

Participants included **Ken Bain**, **Eldred Barnes**, **Odette Bartnicki**, **Coralie Bryant**, **Ron Canuel**, **Paul Cuthbert**, **Cindy Finn**, **Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells**, **Jim Gibbons**, **Jim Grieve**, **Theresa Harris**, **Metro Huculak**, **Frank Kelly**, **Nick Milanetti**, **Roger Nippard**, **Claudia Parker**, **Kath Rhyason**, **Gary Strother**, **Jack Sullivan**, **Ed Walsh**, **Ed Wittchen** and **Barry Wowk**.

The two-day dialogue examined five key items:

- to review the position of CASA in Canadian education
- to determine what CASA offers to its membership
- to formulate future themes that will take CASA forward in terms of communications, publications and the national conference
- to determine the strengths and challenges of the association and to seek agreement on priorities, themes and operational direction
- to provide advice to the executive on the way forward for the association on organizational structure, future themes, membership involvement, conference locations and structure, communications and finances
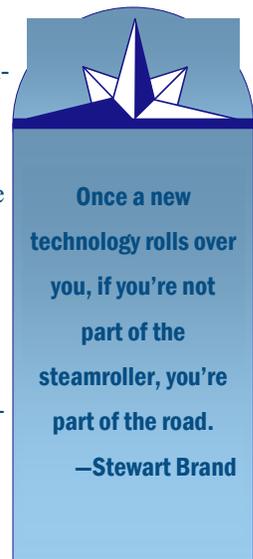
The association's strengths, challenges, priorities and actions were discussed at length.

- CASA's communications, publications and conferences highlight the expertise within the association, and the summer conferences are appreciated for their locations, themes, presenters and activities, as well as their focus on families, conversations and closeness.
- The organization is able to act as a bridge between theory and practice.
- CASA provides organizational leadership through the commitment and dedication of the volunteers who serve as executive, the membership and the executive director.
- CASA has recovered from a time of fiscal challenge to become financially stable.

Challenges

- CASA and its role as an organization is not well understood by senior administrators across Canada or by other educational organizations.

> Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road.
>
> —Stewart Brand

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- At present, CASA does not have pan-Canadian participation or representation from all provinces and territories.
- CASA depends largely on volunteerism. Resources, including staffing, finances, and 21st century communications, are limited.
- Senior administrators have many choices; there are other organizations with similar goals, membership and professional development activities across Canada and the US.
- We must clarify who can be a member of CASA and how the executive membership is established.
- More work is needed to develop connections to other organizations with similar goals and to establish partnerships.
- There needs to be a long-term strategic plan about the summer conference, particularly in terms of venues and themes.
- CASA serves as the "national voice for Canadian senior educational leaders" but the target audience and who speaks could be better defined.
- At a time when there is a focus on accountability and value for dollars, the value of membership in CASA, including affiliate membership, needs to be clearly defined.

- Dual (affiliate fee + associate membership)
- Individual fee (requires registry + tracking)
- User pay (conference registration according to member/non-member fee)
- Contribution per affiliate + individual membership

The favoured model discussed is the transitional model, whereby the present $50 per person in affiliate fee would be kept, and the affiliate membership and national governing body would be encouraged to determine the fee structure.

From left, **Jack Sullivan** of MASS and **Metro Huculak** and **Claudia Parker** of NWTSA.

Priorities and Actions
Five main priorities for CASA were brought forward.

The first is to invite pan-Canadian participation in the association through affiliate representation and individual participation. This can be achieved by establishing a national governing board with representation from each province (i.e., provincial presidents or alternates and executive directors with executive and regional representation to be determined from this group). As well, national provincial presidents or alternates and executive directors from each province should be invited to an annual national dialogue focused on sharing what each is doing and discussing common themes.

Second, membership and fee structure need to be clearly defined. Several suggested models were put forward:

Third, there needs to be an increase, through communications and branding, in how others understand CASA. Suggestions put forth include renaming and rebranding the organization (e.g., Canadian Association of School System Administrators or CASSA), and undertaking a communications audit focused on rebranding the association.

Fourth, themes and venues should be established on a five-year forecast and a two-year forward commitment. Several themes came out of a brainstorming session, including

- student engagement
- ethical leadership
- social justice/equity
- creative learning
- international education
- community engagement
- public engagement
- differentiation
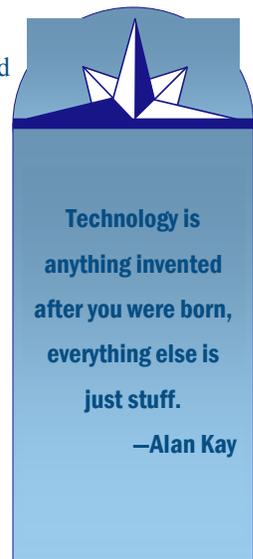- student mental health
- staff wellness

Technology is anything invented after you were born, everything else is just stuff.

—Alan Kay

Our Mission

CASA exists to promote and enhance effective administration and leadership in the provision of quality in education in Canada.

Our Beliefs

- School system administration is a noble profession.
- Effective leadership and administration of school systems are essential.
- Individually and collectively, school system administrators provide leadership for quality in education.
- Communication and cooperation with other stakeholder groups in education are vital.
- Individually and collectively, school system administrators can assist one another.

Our Goals

- To provide a national voice on education matters.
- To promote and provide opportunity for professional development of the membership.
- To promote communication and liaison with national and international organizations having an interest in education.
- To provide a variety of services to the membership.
- To recognize outstanding contributions to education in Canada.

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- development/retention of school leaders
- anti-bullying
- special education
- early intervention
- literacy
- teacher prep

Priority themes suggested included
- Aboriginal education
- personalizing instruction
- education for a sustainable future (social health and well being, environment and economy)

Fifth, the organization must continue to ensure it is financially stable. CASA must consider potential additional resources through sponsorship, balance goals and actions with fiscal considerations, and consider the sustainability of the executive and executive director leadership.

Summary
CASA has made significant progress in the last eight years: increasing membership involvement, building relationships, focusing on educational themes that are of national interest and increasing its voice through print and electronic com-

munications. During this time, CASA has moved from being in significant debt to achieving fiscal stability.

To move forward toward increased national presence and dialogue will take the same dedication and commitment of CASA members and leaders over the next few years. It is apparent from the national dialogue of participants at this planning session that this dedication and commitment is present and leadership is strong.

This report isn't just a summary of priorities and directions set up by these leaders and recommendations for a positive path forward toward these goals. It is a call to action.

CASS's **Roger Nippard**, **Kath Rhyason** and **Gary Strother**.

*Many thanks to **Jim Gibbons** for his hard work in preparing a longer version of this report.*