

# **TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT**

**Name:** Natalie Waddell      **Date Submitted:** February 1, 2016

**Name of Conference:** Public Education Symposium

**Sponsoring Organization:** OPSBA

**Theme (If any):**

**Conference Dates:** January 28, 2016 to January 30, 2016

**Location:** Toronto, Ontario

## **Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:**

**Change: learn to love it, learn to lead** with Richard Gerver

The overall messages I received from this talk was that systems and structures change nothing. It is, in fact, people that change things. There is a need to recalibrate how people view education. We need to take a step backward when looking at problems with as policy or procedure; don't simply look at fixing the current system, but rather transforming it.

It is important that we model the behaviour we want from our students. If we shift our way of thinking, so will our students. Currently, most people equate risk taking and failure as bad things. But the truth of the matter is that you learn nothing by getting something right. You learn by mistakes. Some children are born risk-takers, others are not.

**Why We Explore** with Natalie Panek

Natalie spoke about the key factors that have lead to her successes so far, and how these factors can help anyone succeed:

Perseverance - create your own opportunities

Peak Moments - these are times in your life where you are full of life and confident that you are on the right path to success. You feel challenged during these moments. You should reflect on these times as they are evidence of what your goals are, what motivates you, and what you are passionate about.

Embracing Failure - understanding how things break or fail helps us see how we can alter things and lead us to success.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration - it's important to bring together experts.

Patience - hard work and time is required for all successes. You should take the time to evaluate the risks to succeed safely. And only take risks based on your personal limitations. Success will come if you have patience.

Mentorship - create and nurture one-on-one relationships with those people that inspire you, and look for people that can help you up.

Think about what your foundation for success is. Do you love your story? Is it a story you want to share with others?

### **Mind, Brain and Education** with Daniel Ansari

Why should educators care about cognitive neuroscience? Surveys show that teachers are interested in brain research. Education changes the brain and teachers are the agents of change for the brain.

There are many false claims (i.e., "neuromyths") being used in education.

Neuromyths include:

1. We only use 10% of our brains. This is untrue. We use all of it all of the time.
2. Different people have different learning styles (i.e., auditory, visual, etc.) This is also a myth.
3. Some people are more left brained or more right brained. This is not true.

We need to critically evaluate these claims before applying them in the classroom.

### **The New Role of the Ombudsman** with Barbara Findlay

The Ombudsman was given oversight over school boards in September 2015. This presentation focused on how the Ombudsman office functions with respect to school boards (i.e., how cases are investigated and resolved).

The four pillars of their work include independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and credible processes. It is the office of "last resort" and complaints can be made confidentially.

There have been 292 school board complaints since September 2015; 167 of them are now closed. The majority of these complaints involve issues relating to special education, school staff, transportation, employees, and safety and security. Fifty six percent of school board complaints are resolved within two weeks of initiation. And, as of now, there has been no formal investigation of a school board.

When a complaint is received they "triage" them, often sending the individuals back to the school board to complete the steps in their complaints process. They look at whether or not procedures and policies have been followed, and make informal recommendations to school boards. Under no circumstances can the Ombudsman overturn a decision that has already been made by the school board.

### **The 3 P's of Reducing The Impact of Poverty** with Shelley White

The impact of poverty is far reaching and the pupil, the parent (caregiver), and public policy all need to work together to help decrease poverty. The solution is to focus on root causes, on holistic solution and on long term solutions.

Children don't raise themselves; they need good parents. We need to 'normalize' the

concept of going into parenting programs and we need to improve access to these programs.

Public policy and programs such as FDK, tax credits, Access Assist, Transit Assistance, affordable housing, all play a significant role in reducing the impacts of poverty.

### **From Typewriter To Twitter** with Sean Mallen

Sean spoke about how Twitter (and other social media sources) has changed the landscape of reporting. The speed at which information travels now is astounding. He also cautioned about being careful about what you put out on the internet, as it is permanently there for all to see. He also suggested that you should never avoid a reporter; it's better to have them hear your side of the story too.

### **A Cornucopia of Legal Issues** with Sheila MacKinnon and Jennifer McIntyre

This was a breakout session which was a discussion on the Ombudsman oversight, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and Freedom of Information requests.

The discussion on the Ombudsman really just reiterated what was covered in the earlier session by the Ombudsman herself. Other discussion in the hour included how freedom of information requests can encompass texts sent to and from phones, in addition to emails from both board accounts and personal accounts (although, in the case of personal accounts you need to willingly hand them over). There was also conversation about what constitutes a meeting between trustees, which is defined as any meeting where you are "advancing board business".