

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Ted Martin

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Name of Conference: Public Education Symposium

Sponsoring Organization: Ontario Public School Boards Assoc.

Theme (If any): _____

Conference Dates: January 28/16 – January 30/16

Location: Toronto

Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:
(Include a brief Summary)

Why We Explore

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The right stuff - we all have it. We just need to find our passion. Confidence, teamwork, accountability.

Foundations for success:

- Perseverance (internship at NASA, after being rejected four times)
- Peak Moments - live a life of them - reflect on them - outside your comfort zone - challenged
- Embracing Failure - if we understand how things break and fail, we can understand how it works and translate it into success
- Working Outside Comfort Zone
- Multidisciplinary Collaboration - STEM should be STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) - powerful avenue to innovation
- Patience - take time to evaluate the risks based on your own capabilities and take appropriate action to succeed - success will come if you are patient
- Mentorship - one on one relationships with people who can help you up the steps (and also mentor others) & role models (nobody knows the trailblazing women). Need to provide real world projects and mentors to inspire more females in STEM.

Think about your own foundations for success. Do you love your story and want to share it with others?

Mind, Brain and Education

Daniel Ansari

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Why educators should care about neuroscience? Education changes the brain's biology. What happens in the classroom - good or bad - creates pathways in the brain.

Harness what we know about the brain and how the brain learns to dictate how we teach.

Most educators don't differentiate between neuroscience and cognitive psychology - knowledge from both can help form educational practice and inform the way teachers think about learning.

Plasticity is a mechanism for the organism to adapt in its social and cultural environment. Brain imaging can help predict and track educational interventions. Neuroscience needs to be aligned with other sources of knowledge - imaging can't replace behavioural observations/tests.

Myths: We only use 10% of our brains (we use all our brain all the time). Different people have different learning styles (learning is multi-modal) - Hal Pashler and colleagues found ample evidence that people believe they have different learning styles, but almost no evidence that such styles actually exist. We aren't left or right-brained, so brain gym doesn't work. Brain training doesn't work (Lumosity) - people get better at the game, but it isn't transferable.

These myths affect the way teachers teach and can be detrimental.

Promising productive future avenues: teacher training needs to be updated to give them a better understanding of their students, of learning, and get better at evaluating pedagogical approaches and debunking the myths.

Not from lab to classroom - evidence based education is cyclical.

The new role of the ombudsman

Barbara Finlay

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Ombudsman means "public protector" (from Swedish).

Four pillars:

- Independence (not advocates or rubber stamps)
- Impartiality
- Confidentiality
- Creditable Process (solid recommendations that can be accepted)

An office of last resort - step in where other mechanisms don't work - direct complainants back to complaint resolution and appeal processes, if they have not been exhausted.

Over 23,000 complaints received in 2014-15. Now also oversee 444 municipalities, 81 school boards and 21 universities.

Monitor complaint trends and make recommendations more broadly on how an issue should be dealt with.

Don't get involved in decisions, but only whether procedures have been followed.

Early resolutions - want to look at more recent issues or at least those that have a current impact (almost never find that a complaint is frivolous or vexatious) - identify if there are more processes to be followed - try to resolve complaints quickly (56% within two weeks)

Systemic investigations - e.g. Lotto ticket winner scam - look for trends or areas where they can make a big impact for the public

School board complaints: special education, staff, transportation, employee issues (usually referred to union), safety and security of students

Often find policies and procedures are followed, but not communicated well

The 3 Ps of Reducing the Impact of Poverty

Shelley White

United Way of Peel Region

The 3 Ps:

- Pupils
- Parents
- Public Policy

Enhancing student success is a complex issue that requires a holistic approach

For example, the Hockey Solution: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=T721qBLIA8A>

Let's treat poverty like SAARs - something to be eradicated - rather than like the flu - to be tolerated.

Poverty erodes children's esteem, reduces their empathy, effects their mental health, limits their goals. Currency of self-esteem.

Must address the root causes of poverty - food banks do not.

The best way to eliminate poverty is to start with the kids - to break the cycle of poverty. When kids participate in a high quality after-school program, their behaviour and academic performance improves.

We need to normalize parenting programs - everyone should go, not just bad parents.

Two generation programs are vital - parents and kids in the same program - supplying support for the parents and the children.

Policies that are important to the sociology and health of parents and their families (e.g., transit assistance).

Focus on long-term funding rather than short-term programs.

Reducing the impact of poverty is possible.

From typewriter to twitter

Sean Mallen

Fewer reporters are chasing fewer stories.

Citizen reporters aren't held to the same level of objectivity, etc.

Demands to file stories have made reporting, investigating, crafting almost impossible.

You are one tweet away from being fired. Be careful with humour. Be careful when you read the comments and consider the source - you are more likely to hear from opponents. A social media plan needs to be part of a crisis plan - need to get message out within minutes.

The basic rules of effective communications have not changed. Prepare and write in careful, clear language. Return calls from newspeople, even if you don't have much to say, or else your side will not be heard - the only reason a public person is ambushed by reporters is because they are trying to duck reporters. Answer all questions. Avoid speculative answers. Almost always, the best communications strategy is the right thing to do.

A Blueprint for Addressing Poverty

Poverty is not an enabler for helping students be FDK ready.

Although before- and after-school programs are great, the people who need them most can't afford them.

Change the first five years and we change everything: emotional intelligence, social intelligence development, etc. happen in first five years. Behavioural disorders, developmental delays.

Early years family support and engagement: Parent workshops.

Our poor children are competent, capable and curious - we need to get out of the culture of care, where we impose our middle class values on the poor children and wrap them in care. We need to have high expectations. We need a rich curriculum. There is no colouring (or work shifts) in the curriculum. We need to make the five hours at school the richest - we need to stop blaming the parent and worrying about what isn't happening before and after, and start mapping the curriculum to their experience - real differentiated learning - can't teach everyone the same things the same way. We need to bring parents in before, during after school for feedback - parents want to help their kids, but don't know how.

Teachers to DIE for: diagnosis, intervention, evaluation

Create a sense of urgency. Market your brand. Determine method of evaluation. Communicate the initiate, provide updates, share results.

Central West Meeting

Donna Danielli

Discussion of OPSBA multi-year plan priorities. Much talk about role of OPSBA director and responsibilities to local board and to provincial body.

Discussion of proposed Code of Conduct for OPSBA directors - based on template for trustee code of conduct policies.

Updates from all Boards, including much discussion of French Immersion, Strategic Plans, various events (Google Apps, etc.). Peel reported on schools implementing uniforms.

The Governance Structure Established by the Education Act

Mike Hines

Review of the Education Act. (Again.)

"Trustee" replaced by "Member of the Board" - no mention of responsibility to our constituents (a trustee shall "carry out his responsibilities in a manner that assists the board in fulfilling its duties" and "uphold the implementation of any board resolution"), no power apart from the Board.

Chair has specific responsibilities, including speaking for the board.

Trustees are team members and should function as a team. There is no "I" in trustee. "The trustees comprise the Board. The Board is comprised of the trustees."

Managing Change with Humour

Bill Carr

"We have to open ourselves to question whether the ways we have always dealt with things are good enough." - Billy Lewis, Miqmaq elder

How you see the world determines how you think and feel, and how you feel and think determines how you act.

The power of "I don't know."

Evagrius said, "don't think about things that thinking about can't change."

Epoche means "pause, step back and breathe." This is what to do when facing change. It gives you a chance to think and decreases stress.

Emotions are contagious. During change, the way you react affects the way others react. Look on the positive side. Need to learn to share emotions, feelings, etc. "Evenly hovering attention": listen to people without judgment, finding out how they feel, think, etc.; it makes everyone healthier in the long run. "I think I didn't mean what you thought you heard me say."

Need to listen to others who have already gone through the change, who have already dealt with it. Learn from the experience of others.

During a time of change, find people who make you laugh.