

CSBA 2018
Halifax, Nova Scotia

The opening ceremonies of the 2018 Canadian School Boards Association Congress included a message from CSBA President Floyd Martens, and entertainment by local Highland dancers, Multicultural Drummers - Malarian Drummers, and African dancers. It did not disappoint.

Opening Ceremony Key Note Speaker
Dr. Rev. Lennett Anderson - Transformational Leadership

Very good and comical as well. Key points he made throughout his presentation were:

Moving from process to progress - forward thinking – always have a forward focus.
His hope is that through the delivery of his speech he will inspire forward thinking in leadership.

We need to be able to speak the truth.
A ship is safe in the harbour but that is not where ships are supposed to be.
If we are not growing we are dying.
Change is not optional, it is necessary.
You cannot expect to see a change if you are not willing to make change.
We have to go through it in order to get to it.

Education is worth fighting for.
The benchmark of transformational leadership is to raise expectations.

Eyes that look are common, eyes that see are rare.
Leadership is an honour, a privilege and a responsibility.
It is about our students and advancing someone else not necessarily advancing ourselves.

Vision casting and climate control are the two leadership roles.
The vision of your heart will remove any doubt you have as you move forward with change.

Anyone can see a great mess, only few can see greatness.
Why be informed if you are not going to transform?
We need to make change work for us.

Changing directions requires us to have honest conversations.
Sometimes we have to pause and reflect so that we can move forward.
Make policies that are intentional and empowering.

Those that plan the battle are less likely to battle the plan.
Ask to see results.
Celebrate and not tolerate.
Our value does not decrease just because someone else doesn't see our worth.
We need to work on moving students from survival to success.

He is genuinely very thankful for school boards.
Small changes added up over time, make big changes.
People can build up society or tear down society by their words.
Boards will be known by their words, their statements and their policies

He spent some time talking about inequality of the Africans in NS.
They are 2.8% of the population but have the most IPPs in schools.

We need to educate people.... When you know better, you do better.
One bad chapter doesn't define the rest of the story.

He's not here as the angry black man but the man that wants to help make change.

NS had an area called Africville.... There is an interesting history. I suggest googling it if you are interested in learning more.

Cultural misappropriation is in our school. For example, schools have African drummers but none of them are African.

Marie Battiste, Decolonizing education: nourishing the learning spirit

Key points made throughout the presentation included:

Education has been imposed upon the indigenous people in way of the residential schools but it can either be a source of domination or liberation.

Indigenous peoples is the heading for all first peoples.
In Canada the indigenous peoples are divided into First Nations, Metis, and Inuit.

Her questions is "How do we improve the success of indigenous students in Canada? "
She feels we have all been marinated in eurocentrism – focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world.

Euro culture has actually not been successful because, many have lost their own culture and language and that is not success.

Residential schools created the beginning of nihilism (the rejection of all religious and moral principles, often in the belief that life is meaningless.)

Why do Canadians know so little about indigenous people? We learned from a curriculum that erased indigenous people.

What is indigenous knowledge? It doesn't come from a textbook, it comes from the people, the elders.

Teachers say that they are afraid because they may make mistakes.

Constitution Act 1982 affirms aboriginal and treaty rights - this empowered indigenous people.

How do we teach Decolonization?

We need to look at the damage that has happened and reconstruct to help them and all students

1. Focus on culture inclusion 2. Focus on the students as a deficit model 3. Focus on equity

TRC calls to action serve as a reminder of what we need to do.

Three important concluding thoughts:

1. Silence is the shield of domination..."
2. "The most subtle yet powerful way we resist knowing is by simply being uninterested"
Sensoy & DiAngelo
3. #NothingAboutUsWithoutus

Dr. Stan Kutcher What is mental health literacy and how can we achieve it?

Mental health literacy is the foundation of mental health.

We need to build on a solid foundation when it comes to mental health, if we don't build the foundation well, how do we build the rest?

Important introductory points:

1. Knowing about something is not the same as knowing something
2. We require really good evidence to help us make decisions

Be weary of the terms like:

Best practice

Evidence informed

Evidence based

Best available evidence based

The health status in our population is not uniform, it depends where you live and who you are.

Schools keep investing in areas that we are doing well. We need to invest in kids who don't have the advantages other kids do.

To improve the mental health of our students, do something as simple as starting to do more exercise, it costs nothing except a pair of running shoes.

Kids by nature need lots of exercise.

We have a mental health literacy crisis not a mental health crisis.

Tell them from me surveys are not the be all and end all - he doesn't applaud it.

Schools are the ideal location to embed MHL (mental health literacy) for both teachers and students.

MHL is the foundation for all mental health.

We are using all the wrong terms for mental health, we need to change that.

We need to call feeling unhappy, feeling unhappy not depression.

We all have problems...but we need appropriate fixes. Example is: If I lose my job I don't need meds, I need a job.

We say kids have anxiety but they don't necessarily have anxiety, they may just be nervous.

Kids have normal stresses to write an exam, kids may just be having a normal stress responses to writing an exam. We need to let them know that that is normal and not necessarily anxiety.

Teachers need to be literate themselves and right now they are not.

We cannot expect or allow teachers who are not mental health literate to teach mental health literacy to our students.

Our schools need to teach the difference to our students, it is a great investment in the future.

Teachers will be better able to now differentiate between the stressors of the job/school and real mental health issues.

Online course for teachers that cost \$30. Data shows that it is as effective as face to face courses.

The five musts of good health:

Exercise

Sleep

Nutrition

Helping other people

Positive relationships

We focus on the wrong things. If kids come to school hungry they don't need wellness, they need food.

His main point is to make sure we have teachers properly trained to know how to teach mental health literacy to students, it has positive changes in themselves as well as trickling down to their families. This will help teachers in being able to identify children earlier.

We can improve access to the students that really need it rather than going to those that don't necessarily need it.

A TEACH Mental Health course for pre-service teachers is available in four universities and is free. It is also available to trustees.

What about our divisions? Can this work for us? It takes some work but is really inexpensive. They have just received a grant to do a parent version. Hope to have it all on-line in a couple of years and free of charge

Dr Blye Frank Moving Beyond the four Ds of multiculturalism: Taking difference into account in education

Key points of his presentation:

Land acknowledgement - he clarifies that as non-indigenous people we don't actually welcome people to the land, we acknowledge that we are able to do our work there and live there.

We need to move beyond the celebration of diversity.

We all come from somewhere.

We are all raced, gendered, sexed, and classed.

The greatest research project of all is ourselves.

Life is messy but it is not mess.

Becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable without becoming complacent is very important.

The four Ds of multiculturalism
Dress. (Costumes vs clothes)
Diet
Dance
Dialect

He is not opposed to multicultural teaching but if that is where we leave it we aren't going to make a change, we need to do more.

His educational model:
At the center is climate and it is surrounded by language, pedagogy, policy and curriculum. All of these inform the climate.
There is a difference between separation and segregation, for example, sometimes the indigenous students need to sit together.

Students feel most valued when they are called by name.

Role-modelling and mentoring is very important.
The ordinary everyday practices are important and what hold it all together.

Two important issues:
Relationship - they are the core of human existence.
Communication - watching the words we use example parents vs guardians.

Other important issues
Curiosity -be careful of the way you are curious in asking questions.
Passion
Cultural competency - the ability to respond to others in culturally sensitive ways.

Equitable relations do not simply happen, they demand time, resources and desire.

Dr. John C Leblanc

Social And emotional skills in the educational mission: need to have or nice to have?

What should schools do?

<http://bit.ly/SELforCSBA2018>

Objectives

1. What is social and emotional learning (SEL)
2. Why is it important?
3. Where can one find SEL interventions that can be brought into a school setting?
4. How do you know if it's working?

Key skills taught in SEL program:

Self-awareness
Social awareness
Responsible decision making
Self-management
Relationship skills

It is important because we are social beings.
Schools that have SEL have greater achievement.
The school becomes the most important place for some students because home is not good.
Leads to greater attachment to schools for students; they feel safe and comforted.
It benefits the entire population.

Rethinking the brain:
The brain grows up to the age of 25.
There are critical ages when we learn critical things.
Higher cognitive functions happen in the teenage years which is where we want to teach SEL.

Two brains:
The reactive brain (the lizard brain)
The reflective brain (the wizard brain)

We want to teach our children to use their wizard brain and not to react without reflecting first.

Programmatic vs embedded approach to SEL:
Implementing an external program (example roots of empathy) vs embedding SEL skills right into the curriculum

Features of a successful SEL programs

1. Multi year
2. Focus on several domains (individual ,school, family)
3. School climate is the central focus
4. Emphasis on changing behaviour and learning skills

Effective strategies are SAFE:

S sequential
A active
F focused
E explicit

He believes that principals who can choose to introduce programs on their own can create issues.... You can end up without support or working in isolation rather than having a group of schools working on the same program.

We need to be using evidence based programs.

Choose things that will make big differences when we are dealing with limited resources.

DARE is still promoted by RCMP in Alberta but it is not evidence based and has not really shown to be working.

PAX- good behavior program:

Has been tried in Manitoba and is showing to be a promising program.

Evaluation is an important piece - Three kinds of evaluations:

Gold standard randomized control
Quasi-experimental design
Before-after

CROSS COUNTRY CHECK IN

CSBA

Media news conference that was held at the conference was not planned prior to arriving in NS. Letters have been sent in support of school boards in NS.

They were providing a venue to reinforce the message of locally elected school boards being important.

Has been awkward hosting the conference in NS.

They believe we will see similar things happening in the next six months across Canada.

Words of encouragement - be more involved with our communities than ever before.

They continue to work on our behalf.

Work of CSBA:

Advocating for democracy in Canada.

AGM report on the website

Cannabis legislation

Copy right fair dealing

Tax legislation

Indigenous education

CSB Structure and trustee profile on the website ... Great document

Executive director has resigned and they are currently searching for a replacement.

Budget \$230,000

Protected one year operating reserve for turbulent times.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Winds of change:

Change in government

First minority government in 52 years NDP

Supreme Court ruling

Recruitment issues with teachers (require 3700 new teachers)

Funding model review - first time in 20 years

They have met with all school boards but not with constituents

They've said no district should be harmed with the review

Their work;

Indigenous education

Working on a tripartite agreement and it has been signed off

Positive note is that the federal government has committed to funding indigenous students

New resources for boards including an internal site with a members only piece.

All boards are now members of the association

Weekly format for a newsletter

Created a new learning guide for trustees on governance and finance

Funding for leadership professional development from government

Legal services provided a guide to trusteeship

Increased media and advocacy

Debates regarding the Fraser Institute, the media agreed that they shouldn't be ranking schools

Election this year

On the horizon

Bargaining

Trustees are now doing the bargaining as it should be

Bargaining with teachers will begin in the new-year

Brand new trustees will be at the table

Government listened regarding the new tax and they won't have an additional tax

Memorandum of understanding with the government about their relationship and how it looks (puts boundaries on both sides)

Election coming up in the fall, expecting a 40 percent turnover

Human rights code activists that will be running for trustees

Guide to school education will be funded by the government but prepared by the association.

Strategic plan

ALBERTA

News at ASBA:

A year of transition with resignations

6% increase in budget, first since 2009

Renewed mandate of confidence in ASBA

Appointed interim executive director

Provincial government collaboration

ASBA initiatives:

Indigenous advisory circle

Honouring spirit award

Legislative news:

Compensation framework for superintendent

Bill 24 GSAs

Bill 28 School amendment act

Alberta new curriculum

Education budget but per pupil amount stagnant

SASKATCHEWAN

Schools boards are encouraged by partially restored funding

Change from a year ago, government has backed down on pretty much everything they were trying to get rid of

Campaign called "Keep investing in Students"

Saskatchewan expects to see 2500 more students this year

Continuing to work with government for a true reinvestment

Signing of MOU on Treaty Education

Vision and education plan for Saskatchewan - Beyond 2020

New minister of Education, very positive and willing to work with boards, consults and brings people together

Review of their insurance plan subscribed to by all boards

They are in bargaining with teachers for a long time and now will be going to arbitration at the end of the month

MANITOBA

Normally they bring good news, but now seem to be playing catch-up

Remain optimistic about the future

First time in 2 decades the PCs form the government

All boards went through a reduction in funding
61 million cut in funding over the next 6 years
5 new schools this year in province
15 % reduction in admin costs on top of 5% cap
Several school boards making tough decisions
Lots of boards reducing the number of trustees, cut PD funds
Government recently set a wage benefit freeze
Do not have the ability to set aside reserves
Government seems to be moving forward with a provincial bargaining model
Government plans to conduct a comprehensive review of education but the details have not been shared
Many new and challenging times ahead
100 million in funding for new schools
Still has the ability to tax, but not sure how long it will continue
Far more work to be done in indigenous education in Manitoba
National indigenous day, they have implemented formal acknowledgements of the land to all boards in native languages
This coming fall are the elections, they know it is absolutely critical
They need to know that they run on a changed climate from the government
"Getting your message out" resource toolkit now on their website

ONTARIO

Newly elected team
Five priorities
PC new government
Liberal party down to 5 seats after being in for 15 years
The governments may change but school boards priorities don't

Successes:

Candidate election resources website
May 23 declared as Education Day
Shortage of qualified French teachers
Now leading a labour market partnership for FSL teachers
Indigenous education
Education Funding- advocating for stable consistent and predictable funding
Northern remote and rural education
Equity and inclusion
They remain fully engaged in their role as the bargaining agent

QUEBEC ENGLISH

5% increase to English boards
Inequity in taxes throughout boards
Amendment to Education Act
They have separate elections for schools boards which leads to low voter turn out
Active on federal level on dual languages
Facing a provincial election which could see threats to English school boards again
Interviewing for new executive director

QUEBEC FRENCH

Transforming from government of process to government of ideas in order to redefine the role of elected trustees

70th anniversary of the association

Launch of book: 'The State of School Boards 'and also launched a website

National outreach:

Declaration on the framework for cannabis at school

Letter written in response to NS school boards

Will advocate against the abolishment of English school boards in Quebec

Online ballots for the first time in Quebec for 2020 for school boards

Provincial election to take place October 1, 2018

NEW BRUNSWICK

No school boards

Newest members in CSBA

They have had a change in French language entry point to grade one

Struggling to find teachers

Late 1990 elected school boards were abolished and replaced with advisory committees

2001 government brought back elected councils

No bargaining powers

Focus on vision and missions

Don't have a school boards association but Chairs of elected councils work together to meet with Minister and advocate

Strong advocates for inclusive education

Have been waiting for provincial policy from government for protection of LGBTQ, but councils have decided to do their own

Superintendent evaluations - committee formed last year and now they have one model to evaluate superintendents

District positions were frozen and it created issues because it was hard to have people leave schools to work at central office with possible wage decrease and two extra months of work

Had to cancel spring symposium due to flooding, it is now moved to the fall

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Trustees do not receive pay for the position.

There is a francophone board and an English board

They are elected trustees (17)

Making sure you don't throw the baby out with the bath water when making decisions

Extreme challenges

Exciting things happening

Initiated a task force with 82 recommendations

Child welfare is also being focused on

Election in 2019

Full time, 40 new reading specialists will be in schools

Only 500,000 people in the province

Investing in new teachers

Report to be released about review of school boards

Education act is going under review, first one in 20 years; expecting significant changes

International perspective

Washington DC Tom Gentzel Executive Director NSBA

Video on Website about equity

Underlying message for them is the same as ours. Local leadership is what makes it great.

Public education system vs private schooling

Resource www.centerforpubliceducation.org

NSBA.org/cyber

There is a trend to centralize decision making around the world

The innovations we have generally come from local decision talks

This is about community ownership of our schools

People will look at their schools very differently when they feel ownership

HOW A SCIENCE FAIR PROJECT CREATED OPPORTUNITY AND POSITIVE CHANGE IN A NOVA SCOTIA COMMUNITY, Student Stella Bowles

The Lahave River Project

Excellent young speaker

Grade 9 student

Project about straight pipes going directly into the river, the work she has done to eliminate this and the positive changes that have happened since.

MAKING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: A COMMITTEE - BASED APPROACH TO ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT

LOUS REIL SCHOOL BOARD, MANITOBA

41 schools

15263 students

2065 staff

Governance journey and goals

- Clear vision and mission
 - External communications audit - finding out what the community knew about trustee work and who their trustees were
 - Focus on the work of the board and board reviewed committee
 - Approved the draft governance policies
 - Provide focus on meaningful outcomes for students on a multi-year basis
 - Improves clarity of roles of board and management
 - Improves communication and collaboration with the public
 - Improves monitoring of performance
 - Working together by respect, transparency accountability and collaboration
 - Continuous connecting with the community
 - Budget reflecting priorities

Created three committees: (Got rid of all other committees)

Finance and audit

Community connections

Negotiations

Then they also created a foundation called Reil Evate that aims to engage individuals in the school division with the various communities around them.

The adoption of the community connections committee with board members that sit on it. Asked themselves what connecting with community meant and decided what messages they needed to put out.

It meant getting physically present in their communities:

- School councils
- Seniors
- Students
- Parents
- Staff luncheons
- Parent meetings
- Meeting with rotary groups

High review of results included students. They invited students to come to the board to share what they wanted the board to know.

Going forward with reaching out: they have a four year plan

- Parent meetings
- High school students
- Service groups
- Seniors

Parents councils –asked them what are their hopes for the students of the school division?

- Very clear path to job career
- Graduate with financial literacy
- Ability to communicate clearly verbally and in writing
- Appreciation for deadlines
- French immersion fluency

Parent led info /idea sharing night

High school students -

Survey of the students which included these questions:

1. How prepped do you feel for life after high school?
2. What makes you nervous about it?
Not knowing what options were out there besides university
3. What would help you feel more prepped?
Basic financial planning, job interview prep, public speaking, how to manage time, from recent grads, more opportunity for job and career exploration,

Answers to the above questions changed their work and their policies.

Creation of career development framework which includes:

- MyBlueprint
- Career and post-secondary symposium
- Career exploration opportunities

Work experience partnerships

Connecting with students:

Trustee meeting with students - trustees connected with specific students who had reached out through social media or who sought them out at community events

lrsd.net

Service groups including:

Chambers

Volunteer Manitoba

United way

Canadian mental health

Seniors:

Asked them what they want to know about the school system because it is so different now.

They also took the time to listen to their complaints

Seniors days are now more well-attended - gives them a chance to see that their tax dollars are being well spent

Acts of generosity through the division started with a child doing something nice like shoveling snow, then putting up a sticker in the classroom to show what they did and eventually all students wanted to do the same and it spread like wildfire.

This work has ensured that school boards are important and that parents and the community knew that their schools belong to them, the communities, and they can talk to trustees and we are their advocates.

Excellent conference, was thankful to attend and enjoyed the time spent with our board members as well as other trustees from Alberta and across the country.

Next year CSBA will be held in Toronto July 4-6

Respectfully submitted.

Colleen Holowaychuk

