

KNOWN MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR BOARD AND FOR EDUCATION IN THE COMING 5 TO 10 YEARS

A survey of key recent documents is presented below.

- ***Achieving Excellence A Renewed Vision for Education In Ontario*** presents the Ministry of Education’s vision for education for the next several years to come. The goals articulated are related to high levels of achievement in literacy and mathematics, higher graduations rates, raised expectation for higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking, communication, innovation, creativity, collaboration and entrepreneurship. **The four stated goals are:**
 - ***Achieving Academic Excellence*** – including raising the bar for the teaching force, support staff and education leaders, contributing to increased student engagement. Increased perseverance, resilience, and imaginative thinking to overcome challenges are also noted. Schools are to be “compelling, innovative and engaging places to learn for all students.” Students are to have more flexibility and ownership, extend the principles of play-based learning and ensure greater engagement in mathematics, science and technology.
 - ***Ensuring Equity*** – including embracing the diversity of our learners by moving from celebration to inclusivity and respect. Students who feel welcomed and accepted succeed academically. This requires intervening in a timely and effective way when students are struggling, and supporting accurate and up-to-date identification of children and youth with special education needs.
 - ***Promoting Well-Being***: Students with a positive sense of self are in a better position to reach their full potential; developing child and student well-being means supporting the whole child. Health Action Teams were identified as a best practice in this regard and the Accepting Schools Act has been key legislation in this regard.
 - ***Enhancing Public Confidence***: Sustainable, responsible, accountable and transparent systems inspire confidence. Parents are seen as key. It is suggested that measures of success and use of perceptual data and demographic data is key.

- ***The McKinsey Education Report Shaping the Future: How Good Education Systems Can Become Great in the Decade Ahead*** was published in July 2009 and still is regarded as a key document to help us identify major challenges and opportunities for the next five to ten years. Authored by Sir Michael Barber and Dr Mona Mourshed it is a report on the International Education Roundtable which explored leading education systems globally, which sharing challenges, solutions and lessons learned.
 - The report suggests that a well-educated student will have a combination of knowledge, thinking ability, and leadership, supported by an ethical foundation.
 - The report identifies nine building blocks of world-class education, which are placed into three critical categories:
 - Standards and Accountability
 - Human Capital
 - Structure and Organization

In order to succeed it is suggested that systems must be coherent and integrated. Systems that underperform have a series of separate initiatives that don't add up to a strategy.
 - Technology was seen as a way to customize and individualize learning.
 - Online collaboration forums were seen as an effective way to share.
 - To retain excellent teachers a supportive environment was seen as critical – including peer support through collaboration.
 - Effective leadership development across the system was seen as a very cost-effective way to drive up performance.
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- **Ken Leithwood's work on *Strong Districts and Their Leadership***, published in 2014, is also leading edge work that is informing how educators in Ontario and beyond assess their work. In addition to identifying the key characteristics of Strong Districts, Leithwood's work is now taking on a practical element. That is, funded by the Institute for Educational Leadership, Professor Leithwood and a colleague Catherine McCullough, are identifying and celebrating best practices in each of the domains of the initial report. In the realm of *Learning Oriented Improvement Processes* they point to the work of Ottawa Catholic and York Catholic District School board.

- **Ottawa Catholic:** School Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (SIPSA) Sort – organizing schools according to common focus. Superintendents lead each of the pillars. A researcher is assigned to each of the four pillars. They assess plans to ensure evidence informed decisions are influencing actions taken. Family of School principal meetings allow time for principals to modify and review their plans with trusted critical colleagues.
 - **York Catholic:** 21st Century Learning Team: Comprised of Principals, Teachers, Superintendents, Curriculum and ICT staff, Special Education and Plant, as well as HR – unpack the 6 C’s. Technology was not the driver but rather an enhancement to the classroom. All schools had a 21C team, which was seen as critical to creating a Learning Oriented Organization.
- ***Uplifting Leadership: How Organizations, Teams and Communities Raise Performance*** – authored by Andy Hargreaves, Alan Boyle and Alma Harris, the book examines how organizations they study have dramatically improved their performance against unfavourable and even overwhelming odds. The cases in the book share these characteristics (in order to have been part of the study):
 - Did considerably more with less
 - Performed better than they had previously
 - Performed better than similar organizations

The conclusion presented after analysing hundreds of interviews and thousands of pages of case reports, is “uplift” – that is, the process of sustaining things in an upward direction based on uplifting leadership.

Uplifting leadership it is argued, is launched from a firm foundation and solid platform of departure, utilizing viable business models, efficient organizational structures, high-trust relationships and effective leadership succession, proceeding at a sustainable pace that does not exceed capacity, waste resources, lose connection with core purposes or wear people out. Uplifting leadership it is argued can be found at all levels of the organization.

Copies of the latest multi-year strategic plans for the other GTA school boards:

- Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board
<http://www.dpcdsb.org/NR/rdonlyres/F57F31D3-6B53-409E-B284-0489984EE1A6/142685/201419StrategicSystemPlan.pdf>

- Durham Catholic District School Board
http://dcdsb.ca/DCDSB/DCDSB_Discovery_2020_Strategic_Plan_Final.pdf

- Halton Catholic District School Board
<http://www.hcdsb.org/Board/SPR/Documents/Fulfilling%20the%20Promise%20-%20Strategic%20Directions%202010-2015.pdf>
<http://www.hcdsb.org/Board/SPR/Documents/Strategic%20Directions%20-%20Chart.pdf>

- York Catholic District School Board
<http://www.ycdsb.ca/strategic-planning/powerpoint.pdf>