

CESI®

# Newsletter

Canadian Educational Standards Institute

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## CESI CONTINUES TO GROW

At the regular June meeting of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Educational Standards Institute, **Hawthorn School for Girls** was approved as the newest Candidate Member School. Hawthorn, a CIS member, is a single gender school for girls in Toronto. Founded in 1989, Hawthorn boasts a population of about 190 students from Junior Kindergarten to O.A.C. Hawthorn is known for its close and supportive relationship between faculty and students and for its excellent academic programme.

With the addition of Hawthorn School, CESI is now comprised of forty-five candidate and sustaining member schools in seven provinces.

In addition, the CESI Board has approved the translation of the CESI Standards and Guidelines into French. This fall the Institute will be opening up discussions with francophone schools to explore the possibility of expanding services in both Quebec and other francophone communities across Canada.

## EVALUATION COUNCIL

**The Toronto Montessori Schools** in Richmond Hill underwent its first full accreditation review last spring. TMS, with almost 900 students, is a pre-school to Grade 10 institution operating on two campuses in both Richmond Hill and Bolton. The Visiting Committee, chaired by Elaine Danson, Head of Montcrest School in Toronto, was made up of a cross-section of administrators and teachers from both CESI member schools and members of the Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators. The school produced a detailed and comprehensive internal evaluation report and was open and receptive to the committee's questions and comments. The team spent four days in the school meeting with faculty and staff, parents, students, and members of the local community. In addition, considerable time was spent in classrooms observing programme delivery and student participation and achievement. The result was a positive formal report containing a series of suggestions and recommendations to support the school in its own im-

provement process.

Based upon the recommendation of the Visiting Committee, and the Evaluation Council, the CESI Board of Governors granted Toronto Montessori Schools **full accredited status as a Sustaining Member** of the Institute.

### Visiting Committee Member Database

In order to facilitate the creation of Visiting Committees with the most effective blend of expertise available, CESI has begun to establish a database for potential team members. In October, Heads of Member Schools will be receiving copies of nomination forms for potential team members. Recommended faculty and staff members will then be entered into the database and cross-referenced with regard to their qualifications and experience.

If you are interested in submitting your name for consideration, the materials should be in your Head's hands sometime next month.

### Upcoming Evaluations

**Toronto French School,**  
Toronto, September 30<sup>th</sup> to October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
chaired by Jim Officer, Principal of St. George's School in Montreal.

**Crescent School,**  
Toronto, November 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>  
chaired by Muir Meredith, Assistant Headmaster of Collingwood School in Vancouver.

## STANDARDS COUNCIL

In support of Standard 4: School Organization the Standards Council has developed a series of draft organizational review guidelines for use by schools. The purpose of the guidelines is to help administrative teams assess accountability and reporting relationships in order to rationalize their current internal organization. The following model is a draft. Any feedback from member schools would be greatly appreciated.

### **Self-Assessment Guideline: Senior Administrative Team Member**

For each member of the senior administration team, complete the following:

**1. Academic** (Vice-Principal, Head of lower/middle/senior school, Director of Academics, Admissions Director etc.)

- a) Outline the specific leadership responsibilities of your position including:
  - academic leadership
  - faculty evaluation and professional growth
  - organizational management
  - budget development and oversight
  - student life
  - other...
- b) Outline the specific communication and reporting responsibilities and accountability relationships of the position
- c) Outline the process in place for the evaluation and professional growth and development of a person in your position
- d) Outline the compensation for your position (salary and time release)

**2. Management** (Business manager, Development officer, Plant manager, Office manager, etc.)

a) Outline the specific organizational responsibilities of the position including:

- departmental leadership
- staff evaluation and professional growth
- budget development and oversight
- communication and reporting responsibilities and accountability relationships

b) Outline the process in place for the evaluation and professional development of a person in your position

c) Outline the compensation for your position (salary and time release)

view of the administrative structure of a Toronto area school followed by a report containing an analysis of the current organization and specific recommendations for a possible restructuring. A Visiting Committee consisting of Susyn Borer, Head of ECS in Montreal, Peter Ditchburn, former Head of STS in Alberta, and the Executive Director prepared the report for the school and reported to the CESI Board on the process.

The Standards Council will be assembling a committee of experienced Heads this fall to further refine this process and to investigate its applications to the reviews of more established members.

Secondly, any member schools may request a "**snapshot**" **review** of the school to coincide with the appointment of a new Head. Many Heads who have arrived on the heels of a CESI review have commented upon its usefulness in getting to know the ins and outs of their new school.

Thirdly, CESI continues to expand its resource bank available to member schools. The purpose of the CESI resource guides (e.g. Faculty Evaluation, Communications, and Administrative Review and Evaluation) is to provide Heads, Faculty and Staff with the support necessary to improve upon their current practices. CESI has also offered logistical support for policy development, Board renewal, and Head Evaluation.

## NEWS FROM THE CESI BOARD

### CESI Expands Services

One of the recommendations to emerge from the Member Survey conducted in the summer/fall of 1999 was a request on the part of member schools that CESI expand its "between review" services. In response to this request, the CESI Board has approved a number of initiatives to meet the needs of its members.

To begin with, any member school may now request a **specialized review** of one aspect of its programme or operations (e.g. development, plant and maintenance, information technology, modern languages, mathematics, etc.). A small Visiting Committee, with the required specific expertise, would spend a day or two in the school and report to the Head with its observations and recommendations for improvement. This approach was piloted in May and June with a detailed re-

### Supplementary Education Providers

The CESI Board has been conducting an ongoing examination of the review and certification of supplementary education providers across Canada. Many parents hoping to send their children to member schools have asked both the school and the Institute to recommend centers where they can send their children for academic support to ensure that they are ready

to meet the requirements for admission. To help to meet this need, CESI has been conducting a pilot study, in partnership with the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation in the United States.

Supplementary Education Centres are evaluated based upon a specifically designed set of Standards to ensure quality of service provided. Although not schools, these centers provide an important service to our parents and to the educational system in general. The CESI Board will be reviewing the results of the pilot study in October.



## CURRENT RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

### Union Made

For a number of years the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, when it is not advocating job actions, has published a number of highly readable and useful resources. The **OSSTF Educational Services Resource Books** cover a wide range of topics such as cooperative learning, assessment and evaluation, department structure, etc. Three recent publications deserve a special mention.

**Coping with the New Curriculum** (2000) provides an excellent overview of the recent Ministry of Education reforms in Ontario. The book outlines the changes in programme at the elementary level and discusses their implications for secondary schools. In addition, there are comprehensive sections dealing with design down curriculum planning, assessment, developing rubrics, and sample implementation models. Although intended for an Ontario secondary school audience, the curriculum planning and implementation suggestions are universally applicable and worth a read.

**Quality Assessment** (1999) is an overview of the current issues surrounding valid, reliable assessment. The authors provide a wide range of examples of assessment tools in such areas as cooperative learning, self and peer evaluation, and portfolio assessment. In addition there are excellent concrete strategies for reporting information to parents, and for training teachers in the new assessment models.

**Leading and Learning** (1997) would make a good read for any aspiring administrator. The focus of the guide is on the change process and strategies for getting faculty on side in the process of school improvement. The format is a bit "cut and paste" with a heavy dependence upon excerpted sections from more scholarly works. However, it does give the reader an overview of recent research and a guide of where to look for more depth and analysis.

A listing of the whole range of OSSTF resource guides is available on its website:  
[www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca)

### Getting into Focus

In the communications materials for every school, there is a section on how the school has an "open door" policy, or how it "encourages input from parents, students and members of the community."

We all believe that this is a good idea, but how do we put it into effect? Our society tends to be a group of talkers, not listeners. When someone is telling us something, we are often too busy framing our responses to even listen to what they are saying.

One strategy that schools can use to improve their "Ear-Q" is to run focus groups of interested parents, or students, or members of faculty and staff to air issues and get uncluttered feedback.

Focus group interviewing is about listening and paying attention. It is about being open to hear what people have to say and being nonjudgmental when they say it. It is not only about creating a comfortable environment for people to share, it is also being careful and systematic with the things that you are told.

Two recent books are excellent resources for schools that are considering using focus groups to tap into the minds of their constituents.

*Focus Groups: a practical guide for applied research* is an entertaining and practical "how to" book that takes the reader step by step through the development of effective questions, selecting participants, training a moderator, and analyzing and reporting the results.

Providing a comprehensive guide to developing and running focus groups, *The Focus Group Kit* is a six volume set of handbooks taking you through each step of the process. It is more detailed, but perhaps less "user friendly" than the previous resource.

Both are worth a look. When focus groups are used appropriately, the process improves listening, and the results can be used to benefit the people who shared the information. Best of all, your constituent groups go away from the experience feeling good about being heard and that the school cares about what they think. Isn't that what we are all after?

Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: a practical guide for applied research (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000)

Richard Krueger and David Morgan, *The Focus Group Kit* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998)

### **The Leader's Handbook**

Peter Scholtes, the author of the excellent book on team-building, *The Team Handbook* (1997) has also completed a work designed to help leaders to adapt to a new kind of professional employee. In *The Leader's Handbook* Scholtes outlines the need to transform management from the old style "command and control", to the new style of "inspiring" leadership. Although aimed at all aspects of professional leadership, it is particularly relevant to the management of schools. The book identifies the many changes that have given rise to this need to change including: the increasing educational level of teachers (how many Masters and Doctorates do you have on your staff?); the increasing technological content of their work and with it, the ability of many teachers to do their jobs better than their administrator can (thereby making traditional supervision obsolete); and the failure of some schools to recognize the need for enabling their teachers to do better tomorrow than the best that they can do today - that is, to enable them to develop, grow and change.

The book discusses the new leadership competencies, systems thinking, tracking of individual improvement, progress and success and leading by asking good questions. One of the more controversial sections of the book is a detailed rejection of the concept of performance appraisal. The author argues that establishing arbitrary benchmarks is counterproductive to supporting growth and team development.

Heads might like to have this on their shelves. It is well written, and can be digested a chapter at a time (assuming that you actually have the time to read it!)

Peter R. Scholtes, *The Leader's Handbook: a guide to inspiring your people and managing the daily workflow* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998)

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

### To have or have not? The Role of Board Committees

In discussions with various Heads, Chairs, and Board members across the country a recurring question emerges. "What standing committees should a Board create, and what should be their role?"

These issues are best addressed in reverse order. What is the role of a committee of the Board? The basic answer is that committees should be struck to help get the Board's job done, not to help to do the jobs of the staff. John Carver, in his book *Boards that make a difference* (1997), states that there are three basic principles to observe when creating Board committees: Minimalism (the fewer committees the better); Non-interference (not compromise the clear accountability linkage between the Head and the Board); and Holism (disturb the unity of the Board as little as possible). He asserts that the agenda of many Boards gets derailed by the creation of committees that perform management functions that, more properly, should be the purview of the school administration. Rather than focus on issues of governance or policy creation, these committees take on an oversight function that amounts to on-going "second-guessing" of the work of staff. In such a system, the normally clear lines of accountability - faculty/staff to Head to full Board - become blurred and staff members, including the Head, often find themselves answering to a variety of "masters". Not surprisingly, the longevity of Heads in their positions has been found to be inversely proportional to the number of Board Committees (Littleford: 2000), especially when those committees include Education, and Personnel.

The Bissell Centre is a not for profit agency providing a wide range of services to the inner city community in Edmonton. Founded in 1910, its Board policies have developed effectively over the last century, and the Centre has established a specific policy with regard to the operation of committees. Some of the key principles that they include are:

"To preserve Board holism, committees will be used sparingly, only when other methods have been deemed inadequate. Committees will be used so as to minimally interfere with the wholeness of the board's job.

1. Board committees may not speak or act for the board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes...
2. Board committees are to help the board do its job, not to help the staff do its job. Committees will assist the board chiefly by preparing policy alternatives and implications for board deliberation. Board committees are not to be created by the board to advise staff.
3. **Board committees cannot exercise authority over staff, and in keeping with the board's focus on the future, board committees will ordinarily have no direct dealings with current staff operations....(emphasis added).**  
(www.bissellcentre.org: 2001)

Most schools adhere to similar principles. Board committees are, for the most part, *ad hoc*, dealing with a specific policy issue or Board initiative (such as a capital campaign). Even when bringing forward policy recommendations to the Board, current research suggests that effective committees should present the full board with a "white paper" for discussion which may or may not include a number of policy alternatives. In this way, the entire board debates and decides on an issue rather than merely ratifying the

views of a small sub-group. The basic assumption is that while each committee may represent a microcosm of the Board, its mandate should not exceed that of the Board as a whole.

What is the mandate of the Board? Clearly, the primary role of the Board is to monitor the "ends", that is, the accomplishments of the school and its adherence to its Mission and Vision. The Board should stay out of the "how" and focus on the "why", leaving the determination of the means to those ends, to the Head, the faculty, and the staff. In the final analysis, the Board's only interest in staff means is that they are effective, prudent, and ethical. Boards should stand back and appreciate the forest, and let the administration take care of the trees! As a result, committees should never become involved in implementation issues and should avoid giving direction to staff as to the means by which they should do their jobs.

If a Board follows this model, then the answer to the original question is quite simple. "What standing committees should the Board create?" Assuming that most committees are formed to deal with a specific issue and then disband, the answer to the question would probably be: "Almost none!"

Why almost? In actual fact there is one standing committee that is critically important in order to support the Board in fulfilling its primary function of governance, and that is, the **Committee on Trustees**.

The N.A.I.S. *Trustee Handbook* (1998) states that "the committee on trustees is the most critical committee of the board and, no matter how board experts suggest boards should be organized, they all recommend that boards have an active committee on trustees."

What is the Committee on Trustees? It is a Board committee whose function is the preservation of institutional memory, the monitoring of Board performance, and the guarantor of continuous Board renewal.

What does it do? It assesses the strengths and weaknesses of board and committee performance. It rates the performance of individual board members. It conducts exit interviews with departing board members, reviews board make-up, and coordinates the nomination process. Finally, the committee is responsible for the orientation of new board members and the organization of annual discussions on the principles of healthy governance for the entire Board.

Who should be on it? The literature creates a consistent profile of committee makeup: "the Chair, the Head, and a cross-section of the most experienced and capable members of the Board" (Littleford: 1999); "people who have a solid knowledge of the school, its mission, and its leadership needs" (NAIS: 1998); "people who understand governance and appropriate board behaviour" (O'Malley: 2001).

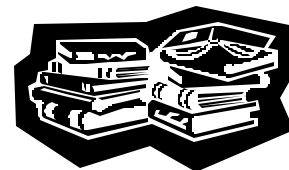
An American guideline for governing style states that Boards must "cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The board, not the staff... [should be] responsible for excellence in governing." The Committee on Trustees is an excellent vehicle to achieve this end.

In the final analysis, Boards should consider starting with a blank slate each year, striking only those committees that have a clear task to undertake, and then disbanding the committee when the job is done. Standing committees that are left to "look around" for something to do invariably wind up becoming "make-work" projects for both Board members and staff.

Board Committees can be extremely valuable for reaching out to other members of the school community. In many schools they are used as a means of creating a pool of potential future board members. As long as the committees do not overstep the mandate of the Board, or the duties of the administration, they can be a positive and productive resource for policy development.

**CESI LENDING LIBRARY - NEW TITLES**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Publisher</u>
Analyzing & Reporting Focus Group Results	Richard A. Krueger	Sage
Focus Groups: a practical guide for applied research 3rd Edition	Krueger & Casey	Sage
The Focus Group Guidebook	David L. Morgan	Sage
The Leader's Handbook: a guide to inspiring your people and managing the daily workflow	Peter R. Scholtes	McGraw Hill



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