

CESI[®]

Newsletter

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CESI LAUNCHES NATIONAL FRENCH PROJECT

The primary mission of the Canadian Educational Standards Institute is to promote excellence in independent schools across Canada. Through the establishment and utilization of rigorous academic standards, it is the goal of CESI to ensure that students attending any accredited school receive a high quality and value added educational experience.

As a result, this summer the Canadian Educational Standards Institute unveiled its **National French Project**, an initiative to improve the quality of instruction in French as a second language in independent schools across Canada. The project has three intended outcomes: the establishment of consistent standards in FSL instruction and learning outcomes in all independent schools; the creation of a bank of "best practice" teaching and learning materials to be shared among all participating schools; and the establishment of national and regional networks among FSL teachers in independent schools.

In the first year participating schools will receive an in-depth analysis of their current programme offerings in French as a second language including a report outlining strengths, and areas needing improvement. In addition participating schools will receive resource packages including: "Keys to French" to enable them to establish appropriate benchmarks for FSL instruction and have on-site access to the CESI FSL resource library. To support programme implementation, FSL teachers in participating schools will take part in on-site or locally offered workshops in such programme strategies as: cooperative learning, curriculum mapping, matching assessment to instruction, etc. and CESI will facilitate visits for them to the French programme in another school.

In the second year of the initiative, a writing team drawn from participating schools will compile "best practice" materials from across the country and create a national resource kit

which will then be distributed to all schools in the project. This will be supported by on-site workshops conducted at all participating schools to introduce the resource materials and share strategies for implementation. Finally, regional and national networks of FSL teachers will be established for the on-going sharing of ideas and resource materials.

Although CESI schools are the first priority, participation in the project is also open to all CAIS, ACIS, CIS, and ISA schools on a first come first-served basis. Information on the project has been distributed to all Heads and schools and is available on our website at www.cesi.edu.

EVALUATION COUNCIL

At its regular June Board meeting the Board of Directors of the Canadian Educational Standards Institute received recommendations from the Evaluation Council with respect to the continuing accreditation of two Sustaining Member schools.

Pickering College is a co-educational school with both boarding and day programmes in Newmarket, Ontario. Pickering, one of the founding members of CESI, has undergone considerable growth and programme expansion over the past five years and currently enrolls students from Junior Kindergarten to OAC. The Visiting Committee Report highlighted the many positive characteristics of the school, including its solid academic programme, and strong sense of values and community among its students. The school benefits from the excellent leadership of the Head, supported by a hard-working and caring faculty and staff and a Board of Governors

which is committed to its further growth and development.

The Board unanimously supported the recommendations of the Evaluation Council that Pickering College retain its accredited status as a Sustaining Member of the Institute.

Bishop's College School in Lennoxville, Quebec offers secondary school programmes to students from Grades 7 to 12. A co-ed boarding and day school located on a large and well-maintained campus in the Eastern Townships, Bishop's offers diploma programmes in both the Quebec system (up to Grade 11) and its own diploma after Grade 12 for university entrance. The Visiting Committee Report described a school with a dedicated faculty and staff, an experienced and highly capable Head, and a supportive Board of Governors. Bishop's is in a period of transition as it embarks upon a major expansion of its facilities to enrich the resources available to its students and it has a clear long-term commitment to academic excellence and the education of well-rounded graduates.

The Board unanimously supported the recommendations of the Evaluation Council that Bishop's College School retain its accredited status as a Sustaining Member of the Institute.

In addition, the Board received reports from **Upper Canada College** (Toronto) and **MacLachlan College** (Oakville) outlining their respective responses to the Reports of the Visiting Committees that had reviewed their schools during the 2000 – 2001 school year.

The Board was very pleased with the rigour and evidence of reflective practice that went into the response of these schools to the

recommendations presented to them. The Report of the Visiting Committee clearly remains a positive catalyst within the on-going process of school improvement which characterizes all excellent schools.

Upcoming Evaluations

The Bethany Hills School,
Bethany, November 3-6, 2002
Chair: Peter Sturup,
Head of Pickering College in Newmarket

Appleby College,
Oakville, November 24-27, 2002
Chair: Pat Parisi
Head of St. Clement's School

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM (PLP) COURSES

The Canadian Educational Standards Institute has been approved by the Ontario College of Teachers to offer two courses for credit to Ontario teachers and administrators under the Professional Learning Program.

School Review and Accreditation (Course value: 3 credits). Teachers and administrators who take part in a Visiting Committee review of one of our member schools are eligible for three credits in the core areas of: teaching strategies; classroom management and leadership; and communication with parents and students. Course requirements will be met through the regular participation and report writing that are currently part of the process.

Interested individuals, who are appointed to Visiting Committees, should inform Jim Christopher (execdir@cesi.edu) that you

wish to use the experience for credit. Although there is no charge for this course, teachers who volunteer and are selected through our *team observer* programme would need to be sponsored and have their expenses paid for by their home school.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (Course value: 2 credits). All staff members of CESI member schools are eligible to take this training, as an added bonus, members of the Ontario College of Teachers will be granted 2 credits for successful completion of the course. This particular training is based upon the *Crisis Prevention Institute's* model and will offer participants the knowledge of CPI's Crisis Development Model, verbal intervention skills, Nonviolent Physical Crisis Intervention exercises, problem-solving and role playing situations. Upon completion teachers should acquire skills which would assist them in developing more effective classroom management.

Training sessions for your staff can be arranged during school hours, evenings, and weekends, as well as during the summer months. For information contact Sheri Little (execassist@cesi.edu).

Upcoming Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training Sessions

Friday, October 4, 2002 - 4-9 pm
Saturday, October 5, 2002 - 9 am - 5 pm

Friday, November 8, 2002 - 9 am - 4 pm
Saturday, November 9, 2002 - 9 am - 4 pm

Both sessions will be offered at:
Bannockburn Montessori
12 Bannockburn Avenue, Toronto, ON

Each session is limited to 15 participants so register early. Contact Sheri Little for further details.

BENCHMARKING PROJECT

As part of its ongoing support to the attainment and maintenance of excellence in both programmes and services in independent schools across Canada, the Canadian Educational Standards Institute provides professional support in a number of areas such as: Strategic Planning; Governance; Performance Appraisal (administrators, faculty, and staff); Communications; and in various areas of the academic programme. One such project that is currently underway is designed to help schools to develop academic benchmarks for both directing their programme development and assessing the achievement of their students.

To support this process, teachers from various schools across the country volunteer to work with their peers to develop clear Standards and Benchmarks which related directly to the programme at an individual school. CESI teams use the “Design Down” curriculum development model pioneered by Wiggins and Tighe (1998). This approach, recommended by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) is based upon the identification of clear standards and benchmarks of student performance. ASCD defines **Standards** as the externally developed learner outcomes and expectations determined by the Ministry of Education and **benchmarks** as the actual things that students should be able to understand, do, and demonstrate. Under this model **assessment** is the strategy that the teacher uses to determine the extent to which the student has mastered the essential ideas or skill to meet the benchmark. Student achievement is graded according to a rubric based on mastery. Finally, **teaching strate-**

gies, activities and assignments are the methods that the teacher uses to support the student in reaching the benchmark.

Based on the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in their book *Understanding by Design* (ASCD: 1998) the concept of “design down” or “backwards design” for writing curriculum starts with the outcomes and works backwards.

The three stages of this approach are:

Stage 1: Identifying the desired results

These are the Ministry or school identified standards and the specific “benchmarks” or indicators of intended student performance that are based on them. Under this system it is important to get away from the concept of “coverage” of the entire curriculum but rather to identify the most important or essential outcomes that you want from your students.

Stage 2: Determining Acceptable Evidence

Once you have identified what it is that you want your students to be able to do or know, then you must determine how to measure the extent to which they’ve “got it”! Certain types of outcomes lend themselves to specific assessment strategies.

Stage 3: Planning the Learning Experiences and Instruction

You know where you are going (the benchmarks). You know how you are going to determine if you got there (the assessment). Now you need to determine what route your students are going to take to get to their destination (the teaching/learning activities).

Once a school has established appropriate benchmarks for measuring student achievement it has a number of obvious implica-

tions. To begin with, it informs instruction and assessment techniques. Unlike traditional approaches which begin with a unit of study or topic, work through a series of engaging strategies, and then assess student mastery of what was covered, this model begins with essential outcomes and works backwards to make certain that they were actively measured, and effectively taught.

Secondly, once a school establishes clearly measurable outcomes, there is a baseline for on-going school improvement. Year over year progress can clearly be measured against an objective standard and a school can see the long term development of its programme.

Finally, benchmarks provide a measure of quality assurance for both teachers and parents.

Schools that have adopted the IB curriculum, or are offering AP courses already have considerable experience with the concept of well-defined outcomes and evaluative rubrics to support them. This model provides a vehicle for expanding this approach to all courses and programmes.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Term Contracts: Are they worth the paper they are printed on?

A recent article in the *Globe and Mail* ("Term Contracts often nebulous", August 16, 2002) outlines some of the ambiguities of one-year renewable contracts. In a recent case, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that an employee who had a one year contract that was renewed year after year

was, in fact, a permanent employee. The court argued that unlike a fixed term contract to complete a specific project, renewable contracts (such as many teachers have) were in effect indefinite term contracts which could only be terminated either for cause or by providing reasonable notice. In the case under consideration, the court ruled that the employee was to be allowed one month's pay per year of employment – or in this case sixteen months – in lieu of proper notice.

The article concludes by encouraging employers to modify their current fixed term contracts to ensure that they reflect the following characteristics: include clear language which defines the term of the contract; avoid language that provides for automatic renewals or renewals based on performance reviews; draft clear and enforceable termination language that provides for termination without cause; advise the employee at the time that the contract is drawn up and signed about the termination clause and its effect; and, comply strictly with the notice requirements under the contract.

These might seem like draconian measures and many schools may want to maintain the more casual and collegial practices currently in place. No matter which route you take, make certain that your contracts reflect your actual intent so that all employees know exactly where they stand. With an open and effective performance review process, and clearly written terms and conditions of employment, no teacher, staff member, or administrator should ever be faced with a "surprise" termination of her or his contract.



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CURRENT RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

Establishing Mentoring Programmes for new Faculty

Many parts of the country are experiencing a hiring boom as a combination of a number of factors: growing enrolments; programme expansion; an increasing number of retirees; etc. As a result, it is not only critically important to attract and hire the best teachers available, it is equally essential to provide the supports necessary to ensure new faculty development and retention. For a growing number of schools, this means putting in place a systematic and comprehensive approach of peer mentorship.

From their first day on the job, brand new teachers are expected to perform essentially the same tasks as experienced veterans. The trial by fire method of casting rookies into the cauldron of the classroom was the traditional welcome that many of us received into the teaching profession. However, there is an increasing body of literature, research and professional activity in the area that supports a more formalized process of teacher induction. Both this research and current practice indicate clearly that mentoring is a critical component in welcoming new teachers into the profession and supporting continual improvement in practice.

What is mentoring? For some schools it doesn't go much farther than assigning an experienced faculty "buddy" to answer questions and show them the ropes. This is often done by linking a new faculty member to someone in the same division or academic department. Although this is a baby step in the right direction, to be effective, mentoring must go much further. Mentors need to be

highly skilled and professional educators. They need to be able to not only provide logistical support ("Here's how you use the photocopier", or "Here's where you sit in chapel."), they also need to be able to provide professional guidance. Beginning teachers are learners facing a very steep learning curve. Research shows that new teachers who receive effective mentoring "are more likely to increase their efficacy as instructional problem-solvers and decision-makers; engage in collaborative professional exchanges regarding improving practice; and remain in the teaching profession." (Lipton et al., 2001) Additional evidence shows that, with effective mentoring, many new teachers move more quickly from concerns about classroom management and control to concerns about issues of instruction and student learning.

There are two recent books which provide considerable research background and practical guidance to schools that are establishing or reviewing their new faculty mentorship programmes.

In *A Better Beginning: supporting and mentoring new teachers* (ASCD: 1999) editor Marge Scherer has compiled a number of excellent articles on the teacher mentoring process. The book lays out the fundamentals for helping new teachers succeed. It is divided into six sections: What do new teachers need?; Creating an induction program; Making mentoring meaningful; Planning comprehensive teacher support; improving instruction and communication; and Listening to teachers. Each section outlines how best to develop professionals rather than simply induct new teachers into the profession and includes concrete examples of a number of highly effective mentoring programmes currently in place. *Better Beginning* offers administrators an excellent research-based argument for the "whys" of introducing a systematic approach to new teacher

mentoring in a school.

Marge Sherer, ed., ***A Better Beginning: supporting and mentoring new teachers.*** (Alexandria: ASCD, 1999)

For a more hands-on guide for implementing a Mentoring programme in your school you might consider ***Mentoring Matters: A practical guide to learning-focused relationships*** (2001). This guide gives you the “hows” of putting a mentoring process in place. The book is designed to support the initiation, development and maintenance of a beneficial, learning-focused experience for mentors and their protégés. It is filled with practical tips, specific strategies, and a wide range of ideas that correlate to the developing needs of the novice teacher. The five basic assumptions which support the process outlined in the book are: that induction is an investment in retention, integration and continual growth; that emotional safety is necessary to produce cognitive complexity; that mentoring relationships offer opportunity for reciprocal growth and learning; that the central goal of mentoring programmes is improved student learning; and, that a successful mentoring programme is integral to the successful implementation of other school initiatives and to the long-term health of the school.

This book is full of both activities and tracking sheets that can easily be adapted (or adopted) for use in any school. There are also excellent rubrics which track the growth and development of effective teaching practices.

Laura Lipton, et al., ***Mentoring Matters: A practical guide to learning-focused relationships.*** (Sherman, CT: Miravira, 2001)

CESI WEBSITE

The CESI website continues to overflow with information. Please visit the site for current and archived copies of CESI newsletters, CESI member school links, as well as upcoming events. Free feel to contact the CESI office if you would like to advertise an upcoming workshop, conference, or a special school event. In the near future look for a complete list of CESI Library Resources.

We are continually improving the information flow from the CESI office to our CESI schools, if you have any suggestions please contact us at execdir@cesi.edu.

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*“Making Good Schools
Better”*

