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CESI Launches National Technology Project

In recent years, schools have invested heavily in putting technology—especially computers and their associated infrastructure—in the hands of students, teachers, and administrators. Many people involved in education, from boards to administrators to teachers to parents, want to know what technology exists in schools and how that technology is being used. These are a few of the questions that are typically asked:

How can technology support the educational vision for our school?

What are our specific technology needs?

Are our technology goals congruent with our needs?

Have we reached our technology goals at present?

Where has the money gone?

How do we compare to other schools?

There is no greater pressure on schools and on-going demand on its resources than the need to effectively integrate technology into its programmes and operations. Currently, there are as many implementation models as there are schools. In some cases the transition has gone smoothly, in others there has been considerable expenditure on infrastructure but actual programme applications have been limited.

The **National Technology Project** is designed to support Canadian independent schools in analyzing the current “state of the union” of their technology plans. The Canadian Educational Standards Institute (CESI) has created a **School Technology Handbook and Resource Guide** based upon **Technology in Schools**, a document developed through the National Cooperative Education Statistics System and funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education.

The handbook is intended to facilitate the assessment of technology used to support independent school education in Canada. It is designed to help decision makers and technology users prepare, collect and assess information about

whether and how technology is being used in their schools. To make assessments that will be the basis for good decisions about the distribution and use of computers in the educational environment, well-focused data are necessary.

Since computer-based communications technologies are continually evolving, and since their distribution throughout the education system is continually changing, responding to the demand for technology data requires ongoing information gathering. Deciding what levels and types of technology are required and/or deployed to accomplish instructional or management goals requires information and insight into the roles that technology plays in schools. Because both the role and impact of technology in our schools are extremely pervasive and the need to know correspondingly broad, the handbook deals with the integration of a wide range of electronic technologies into support of school management and instruction.

Topics include not only the availability of equipment and software, but also function: the ways of using computers and networks, and other equipment, to support all aspects of the school enterprise.

The guide is organized around key questions that the members of the **CESI National Technology Project Coordinating Committee** have determined to be central, pertaining to the type, availability, and use of technology in our schools.

The key questions are grouped into seven primary components, each with a dedicated section of the handbook:

- Technology planning and policies;
- Finance;
- Equipment and infrastructure;
- Instructional and administrative applications;
- Maintenance and support;
- Professional Development and training; and,
- Technology Integration.

After listing key questions for the topic and an overview, each chapter defines the topic precisely in order to delimit the area of assessment and then discusses the indicators that provide answers to key questions. Technology administrators will have a range of suggestions and options to adapt to their own assessment needs. Indeed, making it possible to adapt suggestions for assessment to a school's specific requirements is a major purpose of the guide.

Once schools have had the opportunity to review their current levels of integration and consider the key questions posed in the Handbook, a support team composed of administrators, faculty and staff from other participating schools will visit to share ideas, insights and best practice strategies from across the country. Consequently, each participating school will have the opportunity to send its own staff out as members of these teams.

Thirty-five schools from across Canada are taking part in the project. The Canadian Educational Standards Institute commends these schools for their commitment to continuous improvement in the utilization of technology to augment the teaching and learning process. (A full list of participating schools is available on the CESI website at www.cesi.edu.)

In addition, CESI wishes to thank the following members of the National Coordinating Committee for their leadership in this endeavour.

- Drew Allen-Trinity College School**
- Robert Britten, Glenlyon-Norfolk School**
- Steve Clarke, Ridley College**
- Dianne Dowman, The York School**
- Lynn Hubbs, OISE**
- Michael Jackson, St. Michael's University School**
- Stacy Marcynuk, Kingsway College School**
- Kathy Nikidis, St. George's School (Montreal)**
- Steve Overholt, Crescent School**
- Pam Perkins, Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School**
- Steve Poplar, Appleby College**
- Tim Putt, Ashbury College**
- Lois Robinson, Balmoral Hall School**

Upcoming Evaluations

Kingsway College School

Etobicoke, November 2-5, 2003

Chair: Claire Sumerlus

Ridley College

St. Catharines, November 23-26, 2003

Chair: David Penaluna

CESI Evaluation Team Volunteers Needed

Over the summer months, The Canadian Educational Standards Institute's database was updated to include all short CVs of individuals who were on previous review teams. In the next two years there will be an increased demand for review team volunteers. If you are interested in participating in a CESI review and have yet to forward your short CV please contact Sheri Little for the required form (execassist@cesi.edu).

NAIS Commission on Accreditation

The Canadian Educational Standards Institute is a member, along with the major independent school accrediting agencies from the United States and Europe, of an NAIS sponsored international Commission on Accreditation. As part of the Commission's on-going work, Model Standards and Criteria for Accreditation have been developed to provide standards and processes for accreditation. At its most recent meeting in Philadelphia (September 22nd to 24th), the Standards were finalized and adopted. CESI Standards and practices are completely consistent with these established international norms, and remains the only fully recognized and accredited organization for the review and accreditation of independent schools in Canada. Representing CESI, and Canada on the Commission is Dr. Jim Christopher, Executive Director of the Institute.

One area of interest for Canadian schools is the Commission's Model Standard for Governance. It reads as follows:

“Governance:

1. The governing body consistently exercises its fiduciary responsibility.
2. The governing body of the school is a deliberative body with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that are communicated to all constituents. It provides for:
 - a. Continuity of mission;
 - b. Stability in transitions of leadership;
 - c. Establishing and monitoring needed school policies;
 - d. Comprehensive strategic and financial planning;
 - e. Financial oversight, accountability and stability;
 - f. Evaluation and support of the development of the head of school;

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- g. Clearly defined and regularly applied procedures to orient, educate, and evaluate the governing body;
 - h. A model of inclusive decision making for the school community; and,
 - i. Adequate risk management policies.
3. The board delegates the operational and educational functions of the school to the head of school.”

Heads and Boards are encouraged to consider this Standard as part of their ongoing examination of their own performance in this area.

At the meeting, Pat Bassett, President of NAIS reaffirmed that only schools accredited by recognized members of the Commission may be members of NAIS. Schools will be asked to indicate their accrediting body when renewing membership for the 2004-2005 school year. NAIS does not recognize government licensing or Ministry program accreditation for independent school members.

NAIS Research Project

The Research Committee of the Commission on Accreditation is examining current practices for tracking the performance of graduates. The committee is very interested in having CESI schools take part in this project. Interested schools should contact the CESI office for more information.

Current Research and Resources

Governance: Taking Lessons from the Corporate Sector

In late September the *Globe and Mail* Report on Business published its annual Corporate Governance Rankings. Although not the stuff that would necessarily send people running to their brokers, the rankings do offer some instructive insights into what practices characterize an effective Board. A review of the rationale behind the rankings provides interesting parallels to similar issues in independent schools. There are four basic areas of performance that support the rankings. Three relate directly to the Boards of independent schools.

The first is **Board Composition**. Key questions in this area include:

What percentage of the company's directors are fully independent? Highest marks go to those Boards whose membership has the greatest independence from the management of the corporation. That is, having few or no directors who are current or past administrators or are professionals (lawyers, accountants, etc.) who do business with the corporation.

What percentage of the audit/finance committee is fully independent? What percentage of the nominating committee is fully independent? In these cases, no marks are given if a member of the administration is on the committee (or if there is no committee at all!)

Does the Board have a system to evaluate its own performance? On a four point scale, the ROB gives four points if there is a formal evaluation of the Board and its committees, and if there is peer evaluation done by all Board directors; three points if there is a

board and committee evaluation and some form of individual director evaluation; two points if there are Board and committee evaluations; one point if there is a casual mention of evaluation and zero points if there is no evaluation.

The second area is **Shareholder rights issues**. Obviously in not for profit schools there are no “shareholders” but the same principles could be applied to the major **stakeholders** (parents, students, etc.) in our schools. Key questions in this area include:

Do all directors stand for election annually? Or do directors serve staggered terms, making it difficult to oust an unpopular group?
Two points for the first option, zero for the second.

Of course this area assumes that the Board actually faces the shareholders annually. Many schools have no such provision and in fact the Board and the “shareholders” or “corporation” are one and the same. They report to themselves and re-elect themselves on an annual basis. (The ROB might need a provision for negative points in such cases).

The third area is **Disclosure issues**. Key questions include:

Does the company have a full statement of corporate governance practices? Does the company offer a detailed explanation of which directors it considers independent and why? Does the company disclose detailed biographies to explain director’s qualifications to represent shareholders? Does the company disclose director attendance records at Board meetings? How often did the Board and its committees meet last year?

The Chair of the Board for RBC (tied for first in the rankings) characterized the importance of good governance this way:

“Ensuring you have a good structure in place for governance is terrific, but what you’ve got to be focused on is the results, getting the results for shareholders. But you can be focused on results only if you know that you have a good process in place.”

Sound advice for the Board of Governors of any independent school.

The Canadian Education Freedom Index

Just when it seemed that we had heard every possible spin on education in Canada, the Fraser Institute has come to the rescue with a whole new concept, *The Canadian Education Freedom Index*. Based upon an internal research study, the “Freedom Index” purports to measure the freedom that “parents in different provinces have to educate their children”. It does this by comparing policies governing “the three types of school they might choose if the public system is unsatisfactory to them”: home schooling, independent schools, or charter schools.

The study considers factors such as the level of government funding (good); the level of government regulation (bad); teacher certification (bad); and curriculum oversight (bad). In the view of the report, the optimum situation would be a maximum amount of government funding with a minimum amount of regulation or accountability. The thinking behind this scale is that the provision of government grants for independent schools results in lower tuition fees and therefore greater accessibility. By the same token the report strongly advocates direct grants to parents (currently the case in Alberta) who wish to home school their children. Under this model, the provinces are ranked according to the freedom of school choice provided to parents. Not surprisingly, Alberta ranks first (64% free) – strongly supported by its provision of funding to home schoolers, and charter schools – followed by B.C. (46%), Quebec (42%) and Manitoba (38%). Ontario and New

Brunswick are tied for fifth (25%); then Nova Scotia (17%); Newfoundland (8%); Saskatchewan (4%); and P.E.I. (0%).

The report is interesting but fraught with inconsistencies and misinformation. To begin with, although the study claims that real choice only exists outside of the public system, it also supports publicly funded minority religious schools (Catholic or Protestant), and minority language schools (English, French) within public systems. Unfortunately, the study claims (incorrectly) that religious freedom of choice disappeared in Quebec with the move to linguistic school boards and does not give any consideration to those provinces which provide funding to the schools of other religious minority groups (such as Jewish schools).

Secondly, although equating lower tuition (supported by grants or tax credits) with greater freedom of access for parents, it does not consider actual tuition costs at all. As a result, the provinces with the lowest average tuition (such as Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia) are rated much lower than their far more expensive counterparts in Alberta, B.C. and Ontario.

Finally, the report assumes, without evidence, that students will receive a much better education if they are not “held hostage by the public system”. While this might be the case in many schools, it is hardly valid as a universal given. As noted above, the report strongly supports a “hands-off” approach by the government in terms of teacher certification, curriculum guidelines, and Ministry inspections and reporting. Conversely however, the Fraser Institute also strongly supports measuring performance on standardized Ministry examinations (such as in B.C., Alberta, and Quebec) as indicators of school success. In fact, the report notes that national results on PISA testing do not significantly correlate to a province’s “freedom ranking”. The best that can be argued is that greater freedom doesn’t seem to hurt student performance.

The report also claims that “research indicates [that] most home school children are receiving a satisfactory or superior education to that offered in public and private schools”. This blanket statement is based upon an earlier Fraser Institute study which reviewed home schooling research in the United States but has no real validity in the Canadian context.

This quality argument is not lost on parents. Given the “freedom index” rankings put forward in the report, one would expect that enrolments would be more or less congruent with a parent’s right to choose. However, the actual statistics do not bare this out. In the most recent “rankings” of provinces according to what actually happens, the picture is somewhat different. In this case Quebec ranks first (with 9% of the school population in independent schools); followed by B.C. (8.5%); Manitoba (7%); Ontario (5%); and, in fifth place, Alberta (4.5%). Interestingly, in this list, Quebec and British Columbia are the provinces that exercise the most control and supervision of their independent schools. It would appear that for many parents accountability and quality assurance are more important than “freedom” when it comes to choosing to send their child to an independent school.

The *Canadian Freedom Index* will give the appearance of supportive research to advocates of home schooling and increased government funding for independent schools. Unfortunately, it advocates freedom without responsibility.

Claudia Hepburn and Robert Van Belle, ***The Canadian Freedom Index*** (Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 2003)

Q.A.I.S. Future Planning Study

During the 2002-2003 school year, the Quebec Association of Independent Schools contracted with an outside consultant to complete a *Future Planning Study* (Universalia: February 2003). The three main purposes of the study were to determine what the QAIS “brand” meant to parents and to schools; to explore areas for collaborative goals and objectives; and, to explore emerging educational issues and demographic trends.

The resulting report provides a fascinating picture of the current “state of the union” in Quebec’s English community both with respect to enrolment trends, and the identified needs and desires of the parents of prospective students.

When parents at the annual QAIS School Fair (for marketing schools) were surveyed as to why they were considering QAIS schools, they identified ten issues in order of priority. The top five were: strong academic programmes; high quality teachers; class size; the provision of individual attention for students; and school values and culture. Interestingly, however when comparing independent schools – cost, or price point – emerged as one of the top issues.

The QAIS Future Planning Study (2003) identified four basic challenges for both member schools and the organization as a whole:

1. The need to develop clear indicators of school performance and accountability in the context of the critical successful factors identified in the study;
2. The need to create a comprehensive communications plan and collective marketing strategy for the promotion of independent education in general and the QAIS “brand” in particular;
3. The need to identify and respond to emerging educational and social trends and

Ministry initiatives; and,

4. The need to clearly define the “mission” of the QAIS so as to effectively develop strategies for collective action, and to set priorities for the optimal use of the limited resources of the organization.

In a parallel process, the Heads of QAIS schools contributed to a *Blueprint for Planning* prepared by the QAIS office. It clearly identified the organizational needs and priorities of the association as seen by the Heads of School. They concluded that certain aspects of the *Future Planning Study* should best be left to individual schools, while other issues called for collective action. The blueprint identified as clear priorities:

1. The need to collect, synthesize, summarize and communicate pedagogical and MEQ information (reforms, pay equity, etc.) to the member schools for their information;
2. The need to coordinate professional development initiatives (Heads’ PD, faculty and staff pd-day conferences, access to Ministry, school board and university initiatives, etc.) not readily available to individual schools;
3. To coordinate collective service initiatives (bulk buying, benefit plans, admissions testing, hiring fairs, etc.) among member schools; and,
4. To organize generic marketing initiatives such as the QAIS Fair.

As with all regional and national organizations, the QAIS depends upon the work of the Executive Director, volunteer Heads and other Board and faculty/staff members to conduct its business and provide support and services. These resources tend to be limited and every association needs to consider how to put the time and dedication of these people to the best possible use. The Quebec Association has done an excellent job of both defining its challenges and setting its priorities. Other regions would do well to follow their lead

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<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Publisher</u>
The Essential 55	Ron Clark	Hyperion
Leadership Calacity for Lasting School Improvement	Linda Lambert	ASCD
Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, Eighth Edition	Mary Hundley DeKuyper	NAIS



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