



making connections

Saturday, November 7, 2009, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
York University, Toronto
Stong College Dining Room

Agenda

- 8:00 Registration table open
- 9:00 Introductions and Opening Remarks by Annie Kidder
- 9:45 Coffee break
- 10:00 *Keynote address:* Dennis Shirley, Professor, the Lynch School of Education, Boston College
- 11:10 Workshop and Discussion Sessions
- *Panel Discussion:* Transforming schools – will early learning reform revolutionize schools?
 - *Panel Discussion:* Schools in the 21st century
 - What's the difference between literacy and reading?
 - Special education: a parent's guide to negotiating IEPs
 - Who does what? Navigating the system to get the answers or the help you need
 - ArtSmarts – how one art program has transformed schools
 - Hot topics: you tell us!
- 12:30 Lunch and informal discussion tables
- 1:30 *Plenary Panel Discussion:* Testing: the pros, the cons, and the alternatives
- 2:40 Workshop and Discussion Sessions
- *Panel Discussion:* Education funding and its effect on schools: will 2010 bring a new funding formula for Ontario students?
 - *Panel Discussion:* What *really* helps kids: what parents can do that actually works
 - Technology in the classroom: how is it changing education, the way we teach, and the way we learn?
 - School council challenges
 - School health: a prescription for improvement
 - Making technology work for parents
 - High school hell: sensible suggestions for harried parents
- 4:00 Address by the Minister of Education
Introduction by Dean Alice Pitt, Faculty of Education, York University
- 4:40 Reception (tea & coffee, snacks, cash bar)

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2009 Conference *Session Descriptions*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: 10:00

Dennis Shirley, Professor, the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, and co-author of *The Fourth Way*, a challenging look at education and change and the author of the upcoming *The Mindful Teacher*. Dr. Shirley will discuss his research on innovative change in education, and suggest strategies for successful change in Ontario schools that will produce greater success for students.

MORNING SESSIONS: 11:10

(sessions subject to change)

Panel discussion: **Transforming schools: will the new early learning plan give us smarter, healthier kids, less harried parents and better economic returns?**

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With Our Best Future in Mind the report from the Premier's Special Advisor on Early Learning, may revolutionize our schools. How is it going to work? Is change coming to your elementary school next year? Is this the beginning of community hubs? What **are** child and family-centred schools? What will this mean for kindergarten-age kids? Are there drawbacks to starting school too young? Who should be in charge in the new all-day early learning programs – teachers or early childhood educators? What are the economic benefits of this investment?

- Charles Pascal, *CEO, Atkinson Foundation, Premier's Special Advisor on Early Learning*

Moderator: Carl Corter, *Early Child Development and Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto*

Panel discussion: **Schools in the 21st century**

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Questioning assumptions is the first, and sometimes the hardest step in the process of change. In this session, participants need to come prepared to think, to talk, and to wrestle with their assumptions. We'll ask questions like: Are we worried more about engaging students than teaching them? Is there a difference between teaching *skills* and developing *competence*? Alternative schools, specialty schools, charter schools, and community-based programs – are they part of the solution or part of the problem? In the education system, what's the right balance between responding to individual needs and the overall good?

- Uffe Elbaek, *Chairman of the KaosPilot International Board and founder of The KaosPilots - International School of New Business Design & Social Innovation*
- Annie Kidder, *Executive Director, People for Education*

Workshop: What's the difference between literacy and reading?

The provincial government and the Ministry of Education have placed a huge emphasis on children's achievement in Literacy and Numeracy. At the same time, government surveys reveal that fewer and fewer children enjoy reading. How is Literacy defined? Is it different from reading? How can we encourage our children to read more and to enjoy the experience?

- Joanne Myers, *Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario*
- Patsy Aldana, *CEO, Groundwood Books and President of IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People)*
- Lorraine Giroux, *Language Content Specialist, Education Quality and Accountability Office*
- Sharon Murphy, *Faculty of Education, York University*

Workshop: Who does what? Navigating the system to get the answers or the help you need

Having a hard time finding out who you talk to when you're at an impasse with the school principal? Where do you go to find out about summer school programs? How does the *Safe Schools Act* work? What happens when a student is suspended, and can that be appealed? Will the EQAO tests affect my child's grades? Find out all this and more.

- Jacqui Strachan, *People for Education*
- Neethan Shan, *York District School Board Trustee and Executive Director of Council of Agencies Serving South Asians*

Workshop: Special education: a parent's guide to negotiating IEPs

There is a new template for Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The role for parents in the process has changed, too. What ways can parents best advocate for their children through the identification process? What special challenges do newcomer parents face? What do they need to prepare?

- Alison Morse, *Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education, Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders*

Workshop: ArtSmarts – how one arts program has transformed schools and improved student engagement.

In an era of testing targets and literacy initiatives, the arts are often left out. ArtSmarts is a national program that has revolutionized the schools it's in. Hear first-hand accounts; watch an extraordinary video, and find out the amazing results of the first survey of ArtSmarts schools.

- Annalee Adair, *Executive Director, ArtSmarts*
- Moderator: Patrick Quinton-Brown, Student Trustee, Director of Communications, Ontario Student Trustee's Association*

Workshop: Hot topics: you tell us!

People for Education has seats on Ministry of Education advisory committees. This is your opportunity to tell us what we should be stressing for parents. What policies need to be reconsidered? What issues are most pressing in your neighbourhood? We're listening.

- Gay Stephenson, *People for Education*

Moderator: Kathryn Blackett, People for Education

PLENARY PANEL DISCUSSION: 1:30

Testing: the pros, the cons, and the alternatives

Province-wide testing has been a prime mandate of the Ministry of Education for 12 years. What has been its effect on the education system? Is it driving or is it monitoring the system?

- Joel Westheimer, *University of Ottawa, Professor of Education*
- Marguerite Jackson, *CEO, Education Quality and Accountability Office*
- David Johnson, *CD Howe, University of Wilfred Laurier*
- Kathleen Devlin, *Director, Policy and Public Affairs, Ontario Teachers' Federation*

Moderator: Cheryl Jackson, Host of "Your Voice", TVO

AFTERNOON SESSIONS: 2:40

(sessions subject to change)

Panel Discussion: Education funding and its effect on schools: will 2010 bring a new funding formula for Ontario students?

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The Ministry of Education has promised a review of the funding formula in 2010. What could and should a new funding formula look like? Does the current funding formula affect urban and rural/northern areas differently? How is education funding related to declining enrolment and school closings? Is there a difference between education funding and education policy?

- Nancy Naylor, *Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education*
- Hugh Mackenzie, *Economist, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*

Moderator: Annie Kidder, Executive Director, People for Education

Panel discussion: What *really* helps kids: what parents can do that actually works

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When parents are involved in their children's education, it is a win-win situation for everyone. Children's chances of success in school are improved, parents feel more connected to their local school, and schools are richer for parents' participation. Many people believe 'engaged' parents are those parents who sit on school councils and volunteer

regularly in the school. But the vast majority of parents do not participate on school councils, and may not have the time or ability to volunteer. Research has shown that it is parents' attitude toward education that can make the biggest difference in student success, not their involvement in school-based activities.

- Carl Corter, *Early Child Development and Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto*
 - Jacqui Strachan, *People for Education*
- Moderator: Cassie Bell, Inner City Advisory Co-ordinator, TDSB*

Workshop: Technology in the classroom: how is it changing education, the way we teach, and the way we learn?

Computers started coming into classrooms 25 years ago. How have they affected what and how students learn? Has the potential of electronic tools in education been realized? Is there too much emphasis on technology? Are Ontario students technologically well-equipped for the future? Is e-learning the wave of the future?

- Valerie MacDonald, *Research in Motion*
- Rodd Lucier – *Regional e-Learning Contact, London District Catholic School Board*
- Gorick Ng, *President, Ontario Student Trustees' Association*
- Liesel Knaack,, *University of Ontario Institute of Technology*

Moderator: Kevin Larson, People for Education Network Member

Workshop: School council challenges

School councils are one way that parents can use their skills and experience to support their children's school. In this workshop, we will discuss solutions to perennial issues such as promoting participation among parents, making councils more inclusive, working successfully with principals, control over monies fundraised, and making council concerns known at the school board and provincial level. Bring your school council challenges to this workshop, and share what works in your school.

- Sheila Stewart, *Lakehead Council of School Council Chairs*
- Arlene Morell, *Chair, Thames Valley DSB Parent Involvement Committee*
- Joanne MacEwan, *Chair, Ottawa Catholic School Council Parent Association*

Workshop: School health: a prescription for improvement

We know that education is the number one determinant of health. How can our schools help students to live healthier lives? And how do we create healthier learning environments for Ontario children? This session will consider how we address the health of children, families and youth through the schools, on issues ranging from health promotion to nutrition, physical activity, recreation, substance abuse, mental health, sexual education, and community and public health.

- Jennifer Cowie Bonne, *Director of Marketing & Development, OPHEA*
- Cathy Dandy, *Trustee, Toronto District School Board*
- Gordon Floyd, *Executive Director, Children's Mental Health Ontario*

Moderator: Barbara Ronson-McNichol, Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition

Workshop: Making technology work for parents

Communication is often a problem for parents and school councils. Learn about some electronic tools that can help you or your council communicate more effectively. Find out how online communities such as “NING.COM” work, how to create one, and how to post comments, documents, pictures and videos. We’ll be doing some hands-on work, so this workshop will have limited seats. (Then stay in touch for follow-up sessions online so that you can continue to learn, experiment and ask more questions from your home or office!)

- Gay Stephenson, *People for Education Website Manager*

Moderator: Jan Sugerman, People for Education Administrator

Workshop: High school hell: sensible suggestions for harried parents

Is your teenager refusing to make that first class? Is that former A student of yours starting to bring home Cs and Ds, along with the occasional F? What happened to that charming, loving child – when did he turn into a snarling sociopath? Will marijuana spell ruin for your teenager? Life with your everyday adolescent can be trying at the best of times. Don’t despair, our team of seasoned experts has seen it all, and has good advice to offer.

- Janis Beach, *former TDSB social worker*
- Rob MacKinnon, *Principal, Monarch Park Secondary School*

Moderator: Marlon Merraro, Director of Education and Community Development