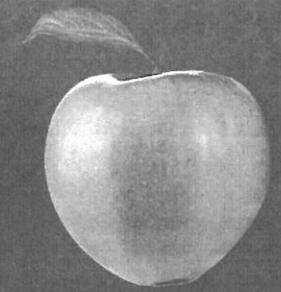


# PEOPLE FOR EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



BECAUSE EDUCATION MATTERS MOST

Volume 17 Issue 4 March 31, 2014

## TEACHING THE NEW MILLENNIALS

A new report from People for Education shows that students have internet access in nearly every elementary school classroom across the province. More than half of elementary schools report that students are accessing the internet on their own devices, and in 80% of elementary schools, teachers start integrating computers into students' learning in kindergarten.

### COMPUTERS IN EVERY CLASSROOM

Gone are the days of the computer lab, where students learned about "keyboarding" and "programming" as a subject separate from their everyday lives at school.

The newest generation of students, sometimes called "New Millennial Learners," is growing up surrounded by digital media and technologies. The ability to access information and communication technologies (ICT) is increasingly important to effectively participate in the economic, political, and social aspects of the so-called knowledge society. Digital literacy has been highlighted as a pillar of "21st century skills" in many influential international initiatives.

Technology also plays an increasingly important role in teaching and learning. New technologies can enhance curriculum by bringing real-world problems into schools and by extending learning to spaces beyond classrooms. But how is all this new technology being used?

### INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY INTO LEARNING

In 33% of high schools, teachers use external websites for instruction and/or assignments most or all of the time. Just

under half of principals say teachers use videos or Youtube in classrooms, and 15% say that teachers have their own websites.

The data shows that most students have access to technology and many teachers are using online resources, but it is hard to get a clear picture of the quality of the resources being used, and even harder to know about teachers' expertise with integrating ICT into learning.

### WHERE IS THE QUALITY CONTROL?

In 36% of elementary and 25% of secondary schools, teachers are most likely to use free online materials when they need new learning resources. This may mean that teachers are accessing fewer Canadian materials, and may not be getting the best possible resources to support the curriculum.

### NEXT STEPS

There is a lot of work to be done to define what students need to know and be able to do to be fully digitally literate. And stronger policy frameworks are needed to ensure that students have equitable access to these learning experiences. Teachers need support and professional development to improve their capacity to select and use technologies. Most of all, it is vital that there is a clear policy framework to address questions of value and quality for resources that can be very expensive and heavily commercialized.

To read the report, or join the discussion about education in the digital age, go to [www.peopleforeducation.ca](http://www.peopleforeducation.ca).

## OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE TO TAKE ON SCHOOL BOARDS

Ontario's Ombudsman is getting new powers. Until now, the Ombudsman's Office did not deal with complaints connected to municipalities, universities, school boards or hospitals—the so-called MUSH sector.

New rules announced this month are going to change that. The office will now be able to respond to complaints about municipalities, universities and school boards, and a separate office is being set up to deal with complaints about patient care.

According to Ontario's current ombudsman, his office will now be able to take on some of the 2000 complaints a year that he had to turn down in the past.

In terms of education, there are few details available as to what kinds of complaints the office will handle. It will be interesting to see if the Ombudsman will be able to take up concerns about school closings, boundary issues and changes to school programs such as French Immersion. Given the number of calls that People for Education gets about issues in special education, we hope that it will be one of his priorities.

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# EDUCATION FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS COMING SOON

The province will announce this year's Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) in the coming weeks. The GSNs lay out the funding school boards will receive for the coming school year. The grants affect everything from special education teachers to building maintenance budgets.

## WHO MAKES FUNDING DECISIONS?

### The province

The Ministry of Education provides funding to school boards based on a number of factors, including the number of students in a board, the number of schools, the percentage of high needs special education students, the number of students who have English or French as their second language, or unique geographical needs (a high number of small schools, very far apart, for example).

Most funding can be moved from one category to another, which means that many funding decisions are made at the board level. Special education funding can only be spent on special education.



### The school board

School boards make decisions about individual schools' budgets and on criteria for things like the number of students a school must have in order to get staff such as teacher-librarians or vice-principals. Boards distribute funding for teachers to schools depending on the number of students and, in some cases, the number of students who might struggle to succeed. Boards also decide which schools should stay open and which should close, and how many custodians, secretaries and educational assistants each school will get.

### The school

Principals make decisions about school maintenance and repairs, and about the distribution of teachers and class sizes, based on a budget set by the school board. They decide how to allocate educational assistants and specialist teaching staff, such as music teachers.

## WHAT MIGHT CHANGE THIS YEAR?

This year may bring some reductions to funding, in particular to the grants that help school boards deal with declining enrolment and keep small and "underutilized" schools open. The funding announcement may also include some "incentives" for boards to begin to share more costs.

The grants also have an impact on salaries, which make up the bulk of spending in education. Salaries have been frozen for the last two years, but contracts for teachers and support staff expire in August. Salary levels set in the GSNs will have an impact on upcoming contract talks.

## AWARDS SEASON IS HERE!

Yes, it's that time of the year: Junos, Oscars, Canadian Screen Awards, and, more important, lots of awards and contests in the world of education:

- OTIP Teaching Awards: sponsored by the Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF). Nominations close March 31. For more information, visit <http://teachingawards.ca>
- Change the View Video Contest: students are invited to submit videos that show how we all can take the stigma out of child and youth mental health issues. Contest closes on April 10. For more information, visit <http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca>
- Canadian Family Teacher Awards: sponsored by Canadian Family magazine. Nominations close on April 15. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1kFLInI>
- Aboriginal Day Flag Contest: youth aged 12-17 can design a flag that reflects what National Aboriginal Day and being Aboriginal mean to you! Sponsored by APTN. For more information, visit <http://adflagcontest.com>

### Looking for more ways to celebrate? How about one (or all) of these?

- Sneak it in Week: ParticipACTION is promoting a week-long initiative challenging Canadians to sneak more physical activity into their workday. Join in from April 7-11. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1qQxLkE>
- Dress Loud! Day: On May 2, kids are encouraged to wear the loudest, most colourful outfits to school and do special activities to raise awareness about hearing loss. Organized by VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children. For more information, visit <http://voicefordeafkids.com>
- Music Monday: On May 5, let's fill the Canadian skies with music and celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Music Monday. Organized by the Coalition for Music Education. For more information, visit <http://musicmonday.ca>
- Festival of Trees: On May 14-15, celebrate reading at Canada's largest literary event for young readers. Organized by the Ontario Library Association. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1dIP4B9>

## WHAT DO SCHOOL RANKINGS REALLY MEAN?

Every year, the Fraser Institute uses standardized test scores to rank schools in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec.

The rankings are used by real estate agents, the media and many parents to judge the success or failure of schools.

But what do the scores really signify?

### TOP RANKED SCHOOLS HAVE SIMILAR POPULATIONS

An examination of Ontario's school rankings for 2014 shows that the majority of the top 20 elementary and secondary schools have two things in common: a significantly higher than average proportion of gifted students (as high as 43% of students, compared to the provincial average of 1%) and a significantly higher than average proportion of parents with a university education.

Thus the rankings are a good indicator of the likelihood of a school having gifted students and university-educated parents, but may not be a good indicator of the quality of the school.

## CANADA AN UNDERACHIEVER WHEN IT COMES TO TEACHING CITIZENSHIP

On March 19, People for Education hosted the second in our series of webinars as part of our *Measuring What Matters* project. Participants from three provinces, ranging in age from ten to we-dare-not-say, discussed how we teach and measure citizenship education in schools.

The discussion was led by Dr. Alan Sears—a professor of social studies and citizenship education at the University of New Brunswick—who gave a brief presentation on some of the leading research on citizenship education. He noted that while the vast majority of policy-makers, educators and the public say that cultivating good citizens is a goal of education, that commitment is not carried through to teacher training, school evaluation or student outcomes. He pointed to a 2005 study that found Canada was a poor performer compared

### HOW SHOULD WE JUDGE SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE?

Literacy and numeracy are vital components of schooling, but to become successful adults, students need to be able to do much more. Simply knowing that a school's scores are high in the 3 R's is not an accurate way to judge the quality of the education.

So what other factors should parents look for to know more about a school?

Student engagement? Extra-curricular activities? Arts enrichment? Health programs? A schools' focus on creativity and innovation? The change in the school's standardized test scores over time? The presence of an active school council? The atmosphere in the school?

People for Education is working to broaden the definition of success by creating an expanded set of goals and measures for schools.

**We want to know what you think.**  
Join the conversation. Go to  
[www.peopleforeducation.ca/mwm](http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/mwm)

to other countries when it comes to citizenship education.

Participants discussed what it means to be a good citizen and brainstormed what students should be able to know and do to demonstrate citizenship. They suggested that students should have a range of skills, from collaboration and conflict resolution skills to a sense of ethics and the ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Participants also thought that students should have an understanding of our public institutions, and the ability to share opinions and take action.

What is measured, matters. We want to hear from you! Help ensure that the measures we choose are the right ones. Visit [peopleforeducation.ca/mwm](http://peopleforeducation.ca/mwm). Watch the webinars, sign up for bulletins, and share your thoughts.

## BUT HOW MUCH IS THAT IN TODAY'S DOLLARS?

In 1844, Egerton Ryerson—the father of public education in Canada—was charged with designing the education system in Upper Canada. As Chief Superintendent for Education, Ryerson knew that quality public education was the key to a strong and prosperous society. He was committed to bringing the best in education practice to our schools.

And what commitment! The next year, Ryerson visited 20 countries as part of his research. He travelled across the western world at a time when steamships were brand new technology, and many countries—including Canada, the USA, and even many parts of Europe—hadn't yet built their railroads.

Some of the ideas he brought back with him? A library in every school, professional development for teachers, and a central textbook press using Canadian authors, to name just a few.

Travelling halfway around the world would have cost a pretty penny, but the investment in public education paid off.

Today, People for Education continues the quest to ensure Ontario's students get the very best public education. Thankfully, we don't have to travel for months in carriages and steamships, but doing cutting-edge research, providing practical support to parents and driving quality in the education system still requires investment.

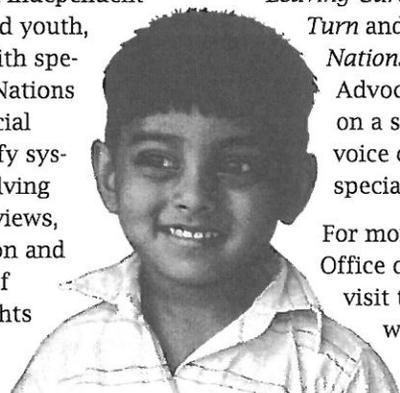
Make your mark for public education in Ontario by giving to People for Education today! Your donation will allow us to continue scouring the earth for the very best ideas, and working with governments, parents, teachers, and the public for the benefit of all Ontarians.

**DONATE NOW! GO TO**  
[PEOPLEFOREducation.ca/DONATE](http://PEOPLEFOREducation.ca/DONATE)



# WHO'S WHO IN EDUCATION: THE PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth was established by the Ontario government in 2007. The Advocate reports directly to the Legislature and provides an independent voice for children and youth, including children with special needs and First Nations children. The Provincial Advocate may identify systemic problems involving children, conduct reviews, and provide education and advice on the issue of advocacy and the rights of children.



The Advocate's office truly takes its role as the voice of children and youth to heart. This is reflected in two reports where youth voices are the focus: *Youth Leaving Care Hearings: Our Voice, Our Turn* and *Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan*. The Advocate's Office is now working on a similar project to amplify the voice of children and youth with special needs in Ontario.

For more information about the Office of the Provincial Advocate, visit the website at [www.provincialadvocate.on.ca](http://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca).

## TELLING TALES OUT OF SCHOOL IS BACK!

People for Education's annual gala, *Telling Tales Out of School* returns for its 11<sup>th</sup> year on Sunday, May 25 at the CBC's Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto.

Join host **Seán Cullen** and other Canadian stars—including returning auctioneer **Caroline Rhea**, and Juno-nominated band **The Darcys**—for an unforgettable evening in support of public education. There will be delicious food, drinks, and exciting auction items to win, including a one-week stay at a Whistler chateau, a Disney World family getaway, tickets to Katy Perry's sold-out show at the ACC, and more!

Tickets are going fast! Get yours today: Call 416-534-0100, or order online at [www.peopleforeducation.ca/tt](http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/tt).



### MARCH 29, NANTICOKE; APRIL 16, BRANTFORD

Grand Erie Parent Engagement Symposium. Presented by the Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1fnHgX>.

### APRIL 2, TORONTO

Pathways to Resiliency. Presented by the Psychology Foundation of Canada. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/OyN3eW>.

### APRIL 3-4, TORONTO

Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health. Presented by the Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/OyN828>.

### APRIL 8, TORONTO

Parents Engaged in 21st Century Education. Presented by the Toronto Catholic Parent Involvement Committee. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1g7e30V>.

### APRIL 9, RICHMOND HILL

Parent Voice Matters, with Annie Kidder. Presented by York Region Parent Involvement Committee. For more information, contact Lorraine Doran at [lorraine.doran@yrdsb.edu.on.ca](mailto:lorraine.doran@yrdsb.edu.on.ca).

### APRIL 9-10, LONDON

2014 Healthy Schools Conference. Presented by the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition, in partnership with PHE Canada. For more information, visit <http://ontariohealthyschools.com/ohsc-annual-forum>.

### APRIL 12, WATERLOO

Rise to Success: Supporting Your Child in School. Presented by the Waterloo Parent Involvement Committee. For more information, visit <http://www.wrdsb.ca/pic>.

### APRIL 29, HAMILTON

Mental Health and Special Education Forum. Presented by the Canadian Safe Schools Network. For more information, visit <http://canadiansafeschools.com/events/23>.

### MAY 23-24, MISSISSAUGA

OAPCE 75th Conference and Annual General Meeting. Presented by the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1eh7XsH>.



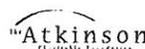
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You can also find us on Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, Slideshare and Youtube!

People for Education is an independent charity that works to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

To do our research and speak up for great public schools, we rely on generous donations from foundations and people like you.

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