

# Leading Student Achievement: Our Principal Purpose

By Barbara McMorrow, Professional Development Director

Leading Student Achievement: Our Principal Purpose is a pilot project, poised to enter its second year. It is a tremendously exciting and successful example of tri-level collaboration involving the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Curriculum Services Canada, the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO), and the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO). This innovative partnership has resulted in an unprecedented sense of a shared vision and a common language regarding a clear focus on the role of the principal as an instructional leader.



The creation of principal learning teams in school boards across Ontario have two purposes: the development of principals' skills as lead learners and collaborative leaders, and deepening their knowledge and expertise in employing SMART goals and using data analysis in order to improve instruction and thereby maximize student achievement. The project has proven to be a powerful vehicle for building capacity at provincial, board and school levels. Lead principals are overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of the benefits of this ambitious and comprehensive initiative. A CPCO survey of lead principals on various aspects of the project provided feedback such as:

- "Taking on a life of its own. Very valuable"
- "Great opportunity to share successes and concerns"
- "Good dialogue and good impact back at the school"
- "We have become much more focused as a team and as a board in identifying goals and areas of strength."

The action plan for August 2006 to August 2007 is to continue to support the current group of principal learning teams while launching a whole new cohort, expanding the number of school boards involved, and doubling the number of teams. New CPCO workshops

with a focus on precision teaching, differentiated instruction, parent engagement and a deeper understanding of assessment literacy, are being developed to meet the emerging needs of the principals so their continuous growth can be supported and sustained. In the last year these teams have had the opportunity to access workshops on:

- Assessment Literacy: Continuing Our Journey (employing data to improve student learning)
- Professional Learning Communities: Stretch Your Thinking and Take Action (next steps in sustaining PLCs)
- Targeting Literacy and Numeracy: From Ideas to Practice (high yield strategies principals need to know)
- Companions on the Journey: Called To Lead, Called To Serve (a mentorship program)
- Emotional Intelligence and Catholic School Leaders (includes Trent University's emotional intelligence inventory tool, MIEI)
- Living Parables, Sowing Seeds (an opportunity to nurture and foster the pastoral role of the principal)

The new cohorts will benefit from the experience and wisdom gained from continually adapting and personalizing these workshops to meeting the various needs of each team.

The lead principals from across the province also had the opportunity to meet with their colleagues in co-terminus public and French school boards through a series of symposia that included a roster of such high calibre speakers as: Michael Fullan, Avis Glaze, Ben Levin, Richard Sagor, Lorna Earl, Stephen Katz and Ken Leithwood. Carmel Crevola will launch the second phase of the project which begins with the August symposium.

The resources that have helped shape and support the project have been meaningful and varied, ranging from the archived webcasts, e-meetings, and e-workshops facilitated by Curriculum Services Canada to some excellent texts such as: *On Common Ground*, *Research in Action*, *Leading in a Data Rich World* and *Breakthrough*. For more details on the Leading Student Achievement Project go to the CPCO website ([www.cpco.on.ca](http://www.cpco.on.ca)) and click on the Leading Student Achievement icon. This will give an in-depth view of the project, a comprehensive bibliography and archived videos of the major speakers at each of the symposia.

Barbara McMorrow may be reached through the CPCO office at 416-483-1556 or 1-888-621-9190 ext. 37 or by e-mail at [bmcorrow@cpco.on.ca](mailto:bmcorrow@cpco.on.ca)

