

Canada's Outstanding Principals 2007

By Marisa Celenza, Editor

From February 25 to 28, 2007, 32 principals from across Canada participated in a four-day executive leadership training program at the prestigious University of Toronto Rotman School of Management. They had the opportunity to dialogue and reflect on leadership issues with renowned leaders from the educational, social, cultural and business communities. These principals were selected by their peers as Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2007. On February 27, they were formally honoured at the *Canada's Outstanding Principals Awards Gala Celebration*, which was held in Toronto.

This program, now in its third year, was developed as a joint venture between The Learning Partnership and the Canadian Association of Principals in collaboration with the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. This year's recipients joined the previous 58 winners in the National Academy of Principals. The Learning Partnership established this National Academy of Principals to support excellence in educational administration. These outstanding principals will continue to act as champions of the program. They will also participate in ongoing discussions about leadership issues through an online moderated forum and will be involved in mentoring colleagues in their home boards. This year the Academy's alumni were also invited to return for a two-day forum with Carmel Crévola.

Nominations were submitted through each province's local principal/vice-principal association. Any principal or vice-principal who met all the criteria set out for Canada's Outstanding Principals could be nominated. Nominations may come from a parent, colleague, community member, local business person, social agency partner or a member of the Canadian Association of Principals and its affiliate organizations. Members of the Canadian Association of Principals may also self-nominate. The Learning Partnership through its sponsors paid travel and accommodation expenses for the winners.

Among this year's winners are five CPCO members - Tom D'Amico, David Dolan, Dan Koenig, Jo Nazar, and Dan Tighe. In reading the nomination packages of these five principals, one is awestruck at the wealth of commitment to student excellence that is represented in this amazing group. There are many similar traits and commonalities in the reports. Mary Jane Jones, one of last year's recipients, of the Outstanding Principal Award, best summed this up. She said, "It is all about collaboration in a school community and how you touch one another." These five principals certainly made a difference in their schools by creating a community of learners and educators, all with the common focus of improving student learning. Thank you to their colleagues, who were "touched" by their work and took the time to nominate them and give them the recognition they deserve as Canada's Outstanding Principals.



Tom D'Amico, Principal
Immaculata High School, Ottawa-Carleton CDSB

Tom D'Amico is in his fourth year as principal at Immaculata High School. This is an inner city school with a very diverse population both culturally and socio-economically. Many of the students come from low income, one-parent families and

require much support to achieve success. Tom reaches out to every student in the school and feels a responsibility to each of them. He is the driving force for student success at Immaculata. Tom has made significant changes to help students and to ensure they experience success.

He is very proactive in removing barriers to student learning. By raising awareness and ensuring support, Tom has created a community of caring and compassion throughout the school. Students know that they are cared for and are comfortable asking for the help they need. Teachers have become much more sensitive to student needs. He initiated a breakfast and lunch program, as well as stocking a small food cupboard in the school that is accessible to both students and their parents.

Being involved in many projects that directly relate to at-risk students is important to Tom. Immaculata is affiliated with two satellite schools, one for pregnant teens and the other for students currently involved with the youth justice system. Immaculata also has an on-site alternative education program, the Achievement

Centre. This centre is designed for students who have struggled in the regular school setting. Tom is very active in identifying students who would benefit from this program and has saved many students from dropping out of high school.

Tom has implemented other initiatives within the regular high school program to increase student success. These include credit recovery periods, the save a credit program, an after school grade nine learning strategies course for grade eight students and a non-credit after school literacy course to prepare grade ten students for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. A Student of the Month award, which provides recognition to students for improvement in any area and/or involvement in the school, is another of Tom's projects. Tom takes time to meet with groups of students selected randomly to get feedback as to how they are doing in school and how the school is doing. Guest speakers are brought in regularly to address various issues of concern to students and staff. Student success teams meet every two weeks and discuss students who may be experiencing difficulties in any number of areas. The team develops a plan to address each of these students' needs and then action is taken. One of Tom's former vice-principals describes him as follows:

Tom D'Amico is truly an outstanding principal. He is open to change and embraces new initiatives. He is always working in the best interests of the students at Immaculata. He reaches out to parents, staff members, students and the community. Tom believes that anything is possible and expects every student to achieve. By involving and empowering the staff, the students and the parents of the school community, Tom has created a culture of success at Immaculata High School. He has truly been a driving force for positive change.

~~~ ●● ~~~



**David Dolan, Principal**

*St. Marguerite d'Youville Secondary School Dufferin-Peel CDSB*

St. Marguerite d'Youville is a school that grew from a population of 132 in 1994 to over 1000 students when they entered their new building in September 2002. Today St. Marguerite d'Youville has a population of over 2000 students and serves an

area of Brampton that has approximately 50 ethnic and cultural groups. When Dave was appointed to open the new building, he saw a wonderful opportunity to create a safe, secure, inviting and challenging community where students and staff could grow to become everything that God meant them to be. This opportunity led to a passionate commitment to diversity and multi-cultural harmony.

Dave encouraged teachers and coaches to offer clubs and teams that reflected the diversity of the d'Youville population. His leadership style is one of empowering his staff to be creative in meeting the needs of the school and community. The staff have adopted Dave's motto of "raising the bar" each year. He fully supported the establishment of a Multicultural Night that attracted over 1600 people in its first year. It has now become a bi-annual event thus allowing students to participate in two during their high school careers. This event enjoys the support of students, parents, staff, extended family members, neighbours, school board personnel, and municipal, provincial and federal politicians. This initiative along with others has created an enviable school climate. Dave Dolan has been and continues to be a change agent for school culture. He often comments, "There is no finish line."

A staff member with 30 years teaching experience sums up Dave's vision for education. His vision supports

*an inclusive model where every student belongs; where every parent is included, where every teacher is instrumental and where the school is vibrant. St. Marguerite d'Youville is the little school with heart that grew into the largest school in Dufferin-Peel with soul!*

~~~ ●● ~~~



Dan Koenig, Principal

St. Brendan Catholic School, Toronto CDSB

During his five years as principal at St. Brendan, Dan has developed a learning community in which staff members make critical contributions to shaping the vision and day-to-day functioning of the school. Dan has attracted, retained, inspired and encouraged dedicated and motivated staff at St. Brendan. He values their contributions to the school and recognizes their accomplishments

both in his weekly bulletins and at staff meetings where the coveted “Bruin Pride Jersey” is awarded to a staff member, who has distinguished him or herself in the previous month.

Dan introduces a yearly theme to the school community: *God Has Smiled on Me; Make a Difference; Faith in You, Faith in Me, Faith in God*. This underlies all activities during the year and it greets people as they enter the school. A parent comments:

When you walk into St. Brendan’s and the theme is facing you, you know that you are in a place where you can expect much and also, much is expected of you. What a great environment for students to learn and teachers to lead!

Part of Dan’s vision is raised expectations for students. Excellence is recognized and students are invited to take a leadership role in setting a tone of respect, responsibility and Christian service to others. Faith Ambassadors are a large, but select group of intermediate students chosen to model the values of responsibility and care for others. They lead the school in many charitable events, as well as serving as homework helpers for younger students.

Dan sets the tone of the school daily by greeting students as they arrive. Many programs have been initiated to ensure student success. The TABS program - Treasure a Brendan Student - formalizes a list of socially needy children who are matched with non-homeroom teachers in order to create a discreet, but welcoming and supportive adult contact outside of the classroom. Each child’s birthday is announced over the PA and Dan makes an effort to visit the classroom to personally extend wishes. St. Brendan’s has a monthly Bruin Pride assembly where student excellence is recognized. One student from each class that displayed the focus quality for that month is recognized. A photo is taken and displayed on a highly visible bulletin board. Weekly, teachers submit names of students to be entered into a draw to take part in the monthly Principal’s Luncheon. A staff member notes, “Children at St. Brendan know they are valued and are inspired to strive for the kind of excellence they see so pervasively in the school.”

Within this supportive culture for students, the staff is empowered to create and direct meaningful change to address students’ needs. Dan encourages a climate of professional sharing, mentoring and support. Through common grade planning time, teachers work collegially to develop programming and assessment tools. Required materials are ordered and delivered promptly. Within this learning and teaching culture, coupled with Dan’s attention to following-through on implementing systematic, data-driven change, the school’s overall EQAO results have risen by approximately 20% in the last four years.

Within a community where staff, students and parents feel valued, there is an even greater effort to provide activities or support for others.

~~~ ●● ~~~



**Jo Nazar, Principal**  
Holy Name Catholic School, Toronto CDSB

The needs at Holy Name Catholic School are fascinatingly unique, due to the amalgamation of three schools. Jo Nazar recalls that on her first day at Holy Name, she watched a child step out of a Mercedes while another stepped off a bus with the toe of his shoe torn and his sock exposed. Jo sustains the community by giving an equitable voice to all parents and striving to provide equitable resources to all students.

In each of her five years at Holy Name, Jo has asked the staff to identify the greatest need or concern with respect to student achievement. Through determining the greatest needs of the school community, Jo has provided for the students at Holy Name Catholic School. Often Jo has accomplished this by soliciting outside agencies to become involved in the school. In her first year at Holy Name, 35% of the student population was identified as special needs. The Grade 8 teacher expressed a strong concern that many of her students although not identified were only reading at a Grade 4 level. Jo asked the Hospital for Sick Children to train four teachers in the delivery of their reading program. Within two years, the number of children requiring direct reading assistance was down to 15%.

Jo has succeeded in involving many other agencies in the education of the students at Holy Name. When student writing was identified as a concern, a school-wide timetable and program were established. In addition, Theatre Direct worked with students in the process of script writing and performance. The city of Toronto offers a “One on One Mentoring” program, in which a student is matched with an adult who will spend an hour a week with them. Jo in collaboration with the kindergarten teachers implemented The Learning Partnership’s “Welcome to Kindergarten” program. The Canadian Opera Company provided educational mini-programs and discounted tickets for the students. The Toronto Symphony worked with a class to create a story and performance for an audience. Two in-school performances were held, one for the students and another for the parents. Parents requested a homework club. Jo approached the local high school guidance councillor and high school students are now tutoring as part of their community service hours. Jo approached the Toronto Raptors to provide basketball hoops and basketballs to the school in memory of a student’s older brother. Private donors have supported the school with free excursions, such as a hockey day at St. Michael’s Arena.

Jo Nazar believes that parent volunteers, providing support, asking questions and taking on tasks enrich the life of a community. She has

succeeded in creating a community of professional educators that appreciates that the education of each child moves in a continuum – Grade 8 begins with Kindergarten. This professional community supports each child in her or his life-long journey of learning.



**Dan Tighe, Principal**  
*Ursuline College Chatham Catholic Secondary School,  
 St. Clair CDSB*

Dan brings a wealth of experience in both the elementary and secondary panel to his role as principal at Ursuline College Chatham. UCC is the largest school in the St. Clair Catholic District School Board with a population of over 1500 students. One of Dan's challenges when he arrived at UCC was to build a climate of trust between students, parents, staff and senior administration. Dan drew on his previous experiences to develop a transparent model to work with all stakeholders of the UCC community. Dan acted to build school spirit with the students, ensure open communication with the parents, provide a voice to support staff and develop a collaborative, consultative approach in working with senior administration.

During his four-year tenure at UCC, Dan has been actively engaged as the instructional leader of the school. He is responsible for staffing decisions that directly support and create opportunities to improve student success. He works with department heads to improve curriculum delivery, to support best practices in assessment and evaluation, and to provide flexible student programming to ensure student success.

Dan has developed an era of shared responsibility for teaching and learning at UCC. He has created a culture of trust and collaboration by empowering staff, increasing responsibilities of department heads and welcoming staff involvement in curriculum development.

Acting as a role model and a mentor, Dan encourages leadership opportunities within the school. He has awakened the spirit of many staff to engage in meaningful professional development by encouraging risk-taking, active staff participation and encouraging innovative practices in the development of department leadership.


On-going professional development is the common element that ties departments together for the good of all students. Dan has been instrumental in developing and supporting the formation of Professional Learning Communities within the school. He has established a culture of teachers that support, encourage and respect one another.

Dan also extends this shared responsibility to parents and community partners. He welcomes open and honest dialogue while encouraging greater parent involvement. He has enhanced communication between the school and home. Since his arrival at UCC, Dan has involved parents in school operations, school budget and decision-making as these influence student success. He supports and encourages opportunities for parents to be in the school and take an active role in their children's education. Dan's approach to parent involvement has been successful as evidenced by the increased participation in the parent council. Parents feel valued and welcomed under Dan's leadership.

As a result of his wisdom, insight and expertise, Dan has distinguished himself among his peers as a highly respected colleague.




The Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario wishes to congratulate each of Canada's Outstanding Principals of 2007. We wish them much success as they continue their journey in Catholic education.



**A Fundraising Company that works for YOU!**

- **No Upfront cost—books sold on consignment**
- **Pay only for what is sold and return the balance**
- **No RISK**
- **A Product People Want**
- **Quick and Easy—2 weeks sale!**
- **A Dedicated Service Team to support you!**

NEW GTA ONLY



Hundreds of great ways to save!

Last year, Entertainment Coupon Books helped raise over 90 million dollars across North America for schools.


The NEW Entertainment Values Book offers families 2-for-1 and 50% off coupons for dining, attractions, and everyday savings.

While your school raises money, your supporters save money!! A win-win.

\$20.00 book 50% profit to the School

---

ORIGINAL



The ORIGINAL Entertainment Book offers families all that the Values book has to offer PLUS 2-for-1 and 50% off coupons for Fine Dining, Hotel, Golf, Travel and an on-line membership allowing for much more.

\$35.00 book up to 50% profit to the School depending on Sales

Over 150 Editions to choose from for Family & Friends all over North America! (prices vary with location)

The Entertainment Values Fundraiser was amazing! We raised over \$10,000 for our Band & Choir!! It was an easy sell. Just using 2 or 3 coupons pays for the entire book. We will definitely do it again.

Lisa Clarridge.....St. Mary's CSS – Music Dept.....Pickering, Ontario

**ONTARIO FUNDRAISING TEAM**

|                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p style="font-size: x-small;">Hamilton &amp; Surrounding Area<br/>           Jackie Heron<br/>           289-439-0932</p> | <p style="font-size: x-small;">Ottawa &amp; Surrounding Area<br/>           Waja Reilly<br/>           613-298-3723</p> |
| <p>Peel, York, Durham &amp; Toronto<br/>           Janice Copeman &amp; Stacey Leake<br/>           GTA 1-888-777-3614</p> |                                                                                                                         |