



The Trillium

Recognized as ASCD's *Most Improved Affiliate Newsletter* in 2001

March 2002

Ontario Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

The Politicization of Professional Development

Take Note!

Membership Fee Increase

At the beginning of this year, Ontario ASCD's membership fee increased to \$30.

Annual General Meeting

Ontario ASCD's AGM will be held in Ottawa on Saturday May 4, 2002.

Please see the Ontario ASCD web site for more details.

Ontario ASCD's Constitutional Amendments

All members are encouraged to read and comment on our new constitution. This can be done at the Ontario ASCD web site.

Ontario ASCD's Second International Conference coming in the Fall of 2003

Ontario Association for Junior Educators'

Discover the Junior Child Conference

April 12 and 13, 2002

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President's Message

This issue of *The Trillium* focuses on the politicization of teacher professional learning, a topic being debated across this province in view of our government's mandatory recertification program. As an organization, Ontario ASCD will be discussing this issue at our Annual General Meeting to be held in Ottawa on Saturday, May 4th (please see our web site for details). I would like to take this opportunity to invite members to attend this meeting. It will give members an opportunity to not only become more informed about the work of Ontario ASCD, but also to provide input on such important issues as the organization's position with regard to teacher professional learning and recertification. The meeting will include reports on the organization's activities in the areas of membership, communication, program, influence and governance. Learn about Ontario ASCD's service to its members which includes the newsletter, journal and staff development opportunities at the regional and provincial levels. And finally, learn how the organization is committed to the mission statement highlighted at the bottom of this page.

Mary Nanavati
President, Ontario ASCD

Web Sites

Ontario ASCD: www.ascd.ca

ASCD International: www.ascd.org

Ontario ASCD, a diverse learning community that promotes excellence in education, is dedicated to supporting the growth and success of all learners.

ASCD in Action

ASCD Networks

<http://www.ascd.org/aboutascd/cr/networks/network.html>

On occasion we highlight some of ASCD's many "Networks" that serve to bring educators together. Each Network is concerned with a particular theme, issue, or purpose. They are wonderful opportunities to exchange ideas, share resources, solve problems, grow professionally, and establish collegial relationships. More extensive information about and contacts for each of the ASCD Networks can be found at the website above.

Building Intrinsically Motivating Learning Environments

This network educates and promotes professional reflection and learning about nurturing noncoercive learning environments based on intrinsic motivation theory. It addresses the apparent lack of clarity and/or the misapplication of the concepts and research related to intrinsic motivation and its place in understanding noncoercive learning.

Global Education

This network develops and sustains communication on global and multi-cultural perspectives and initiatives. It provides programming and resources for global education and plays an advocacy role in support of the same. It also helps members share information about models and best practices, challenges, and solutions, and provides a vehicle for mutual assistance.

In General and In Specific

Reflections on the Northeast Affiliates Conference
Boston, December 2001

This conference proved to be thought provoking and professionally exhilarating from a

Every year the Northeast affiliates of ASCD, including Ontario, organize a conference in Boston. This year, Suzanne Molitor of Peel DSB attended and wrote this report. Her enthusiasm suggests that this is a conference all members should consider.

number of perspectives. Being in the presence of experienced, academically and intellectually stimulating presenters like TheodoreSizer and Carol Ann Tomlinson, the leading edge thinkers on issues relevant to our professional times, was in itself a professional infusion. The audience members comprised of administrators, classroom teachers and consultants, indeed all layers of the academic circle, injected a depth of professionalism added advantage as well. Of course, being a Canadian in a historic, cultural center like Boston was indeed a highlight.

Richard Strong's presentation on differentiated instruction was a highlight for me. His enthusiasm, wit and passion for inclusivity were

truly inspiring. Strong's many practical demonstrations of support and inclusion of all

learners was exciting. Very real examples as to how teachers can mediate to strengthen student gaps while involving them completely in a lesson spoke volumes. Strong's witty and humorous delivery did not mask his professional agenda: to include all learners in a participatory manner while maximizing preferred learning strengths in order to stretch the individual. His commitment to the practical application of his suggestions was unsurpassed: each participant received a personal invitation to call him directly to share in the process of implementation. Strong taught me ways in which teachers can maximize the potential of all students while supplementing their gaps.

The Politicization of Professional Development

Renowned Canadian authors Michael Fullan, Andy Hargreaves and academics everywhere argue vociferously that professional development is the key to improved teaching and learning. Teachers around the world have improved their practice and their students' lives by upgrading their qualifications and engaging in challenging discussion with their peers. Students everywhere benefit from the courses their teachers take, and yet here in Ontario, professional development has become politicized.

The point of this article is not to take sides. When the Board of Directors of Ontario ASCD met at the beginning of March we were faced with taking a position on this issue. The Board is made up of teachers, principals, consultants, and university educators. It represents the gamut of education professionals in Ontario with a variety of different concerns and interests. While we argued about who was right and wrong in Ontario, and whether or not we should bow to Ministry heavy-handedness or fierce union political pressure, we agreed on one thing – that it is shameful that something as clearly beneficial to students and teachers, has been politicized. We commiserated that we, all of us in Ontario, have been forced to take sides in an issue over which no sides should be taken. It is not our place to support the Ministry or participate in the boycotts of the unions, but we, as a Board, hopefully speaking for our members, feel it is imperative that we speak out against the fact that we are being forced to take sides.

The classroom has become the battlefield in a war started by people whose job is not to teach. Certainly the Ministry wants to improve education, and it would be ludicrous to suggest that the federations are not concerned with high quality teaching and learning. Both the Ministry and federations have offered high value professional development programs and financial support for these programs for years. Politicians and union leaders alike are either educators themselves, or are public figures whose credibil-

ity depends on the quality of education that is provided in this province. However, despite their obvious concern for the academic success of our children, they are the authors of campaigns that at least in part do not serve our children, or they have taken aggressive positions that obviously do not support our students. The focus has moved from the classroom to the boardroom and many, many teachers are caught in the middle.

For years, good teachers all over Ontario have upgraded their practice by participating in professional development, often on their own time and at their own expense. Most want to continue to do so, but in many ways their sincere efforts to deliver better programs and help our students have been undermined by well meaning agencies with ulterior political motives. As usual, this is a complicated, thorny problem for which there are no easy solutions and for which there are no clear right and wrong answers. It is clear however, that good people, committed to their jobs, to their profession and to their community, are forced to take sides in a highly charged, political debate that will have serious implications for their present and future well-being.

Professional development is clearly necessary and effective. Unfortunately, the situation in Ontario has become so politically charged that some teachers committed to professional learning are reluctant to do it, and providers, forced to legitimize what they have always done, are threatened with retribution for providing these important services. Professional development is powerful and supports educational improvement and reform. Teachers' rights, as with all rights, must be protected. It is unacceptable that these things have been pitted against one another in what is essentially a political struggle over the control of education in this province. A struggle that should focus not on the providers of education, but on our real concern - our students. As educators concerned for our students, we must carefully reconsider our motives and redirect our energy toward their service, not our own.

Ontario ASCD Regionals

There are currently three regionals associated with the Ontario affiliate. For further information about a regional please contact regional chairs Nicola Benton in **Ottawa** (Nicola.Benton@ascd.ca), Rosemary Sutton (Rosemary.Sutton@ascd.ca) or Cindy Horvath (Cindy.Horvath@ascd.ca) in **Peel**, or Tom Miller (Tom.Miller@ascd.ca) in **York**.

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Ontario ASCD Membership - new or renewal

Please send this form and your membership fee (\$30) to the Membership Coordinator at the address above.

Name: _____

Position: _____ School: _____

School Board: _____

Mailing Address: _____ phone and e-mail: _____

